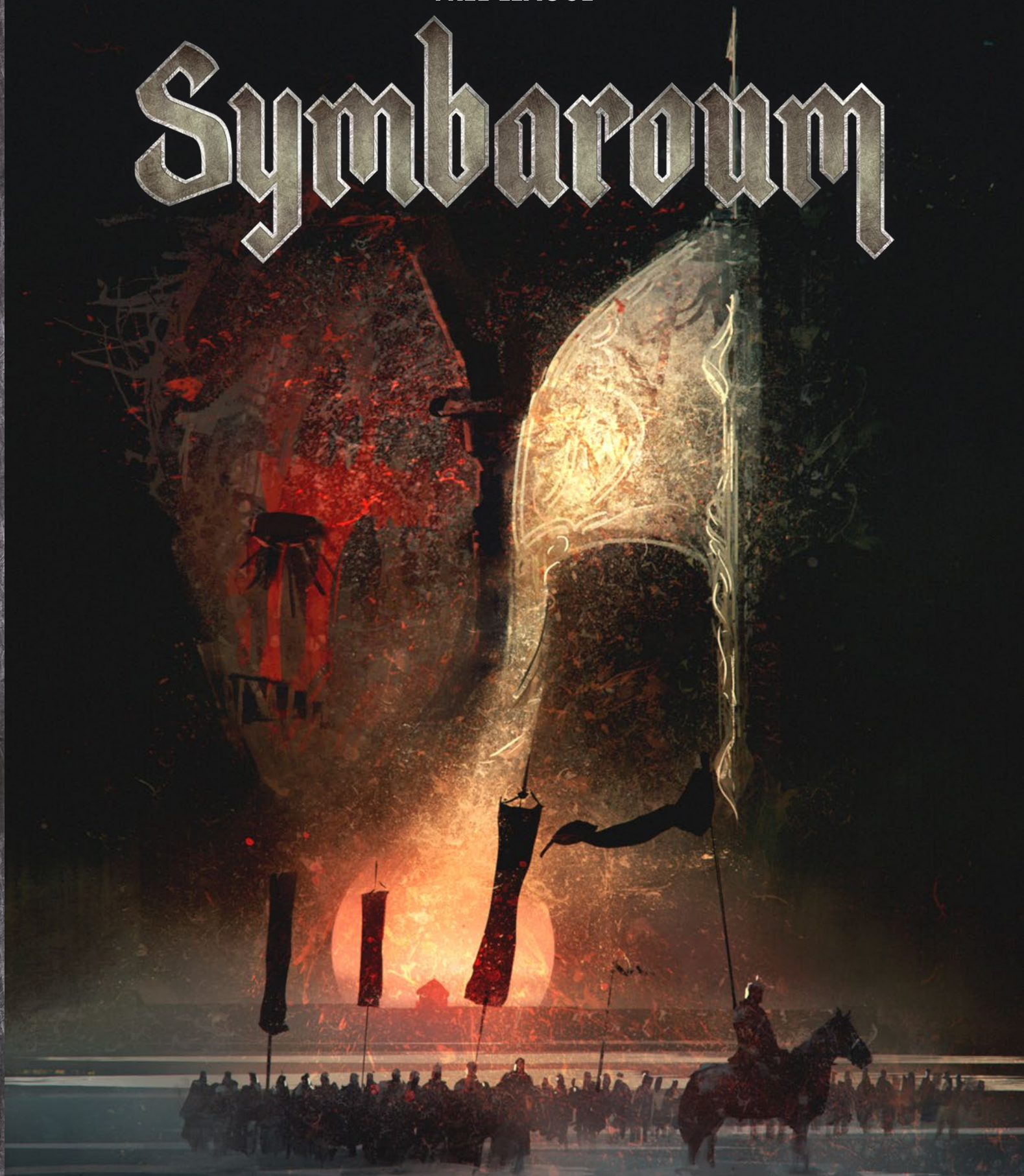
FREE LEAGUE

Symbaroum



Game Master's Guide

SYMBAROUM

Game Master's Guide

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Symbaroum

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The first version is complete!

AS THIS IS WRITTEN, four years have passed since the roleplaying game *Symbaroum* was released in Sweden, and since then its world and rules have slowly been developed and refined. The refinement will of course continue for years to come, but with this book we have reached a kind of milestone: together with the *Core Rulebook*, the *Advanced Player's Guide*, and the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, the *Game Master's Guide* completes the *Symbaroum* collection of Core Books.

This *Game Master's Guide* evolved based on three main tracks. On the one hand we have listened to you, the players, and tried to serve your needs and answer your questions; on the other we have asked ourselves what we want to develop further when it comes to supporting and inspiring you Game Masters, both in the creation of adventures and in leading the gaming sessions. Our third ambition with this book was to compile and build on some of the essential rule elements introduced in various adventure supplements over the years.

We obviously hope you will like the *Game Master's Guide* as much as we do, but also that you will voice your opinions about its content in a way that helps keep the game's development alive. *Symbaroum* is still but a youngster – she needs nurturing and care from both us and you to grow big, strong and magnificent!

Happy Gaming!

FREE LEAGUE PUBLISHING

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A Hearty Welcome...

... TO THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE.

This book is for you who will lead the sessions around the gaming table; you who will portray the game world, provide its inhabitants with voices and personalities, and design or improvise entertaining, thrilling, unforgettable adventures in Ambria, Davokar and beyond.

WHILE THE THIRD section of the *Symbaroum Core Rulebook* covers the basics, this book is an attempt to capture the scope, depth and nuance of the rewarding and sometimes a bit intimidating, or at least overwhelming, role of Game Master. The book is structured into three sections – The Adventure, The Challenges and The Rewards – each focusing on a different aspect of what makes roleplaying games the most enjoyable pastime in the world. All rules and guidelines are meant to inspire rather than to instruct. Nothing is mandatory; it is up to you and your gaming group to decide what to adopt, reject, or use as inspiration in creating your own house rules. Only you know what makes *Symbaroum* appealing to you.

After this introduction you will find a section called The Adventure, which begins with a chapter on worldbuilding. There we describe our thought and work process when developing the Davokar region, in the hope that it will be useful to you in creating your own adventures, adventure landscapes, or even game worlds.

Next up are two chapters on designing adventure chronicles and limited adventure landscapes, with references to previously published *Symbaroum* supplements. This is followed by two more specialized chapters – one concerning so-called Troupe Play, where each player plays multiple characters over the course of the adventure or chronicle, and one that is more rules related, where we offer some advice on how adventures can be designed to challenge even highly experienced player characters. The sixth chapter of the section deals with the places known as the Underworld, Yonderworld and Spirit World, and how to set some portion of the adventure in these strange environments. The Adventure section concludes with an expanded version of the chapter titled Goal Oriented Roleplaying from *Thistle Hold – Wrath of the Warden*.

The Challenges section consists of seven chapters covering a wide variety of topics. The first one

describes how advanced traps can be used to make the player characters' adventures more exciting and includes a set of mechanisms that can present them with unexpected problems. The second chapter offers rules and guidelines on how to handle large battles in Symbaroum, while the third describes what challenges might arise if the player characters own or manage their own Domain – for example a stronghold, an estate, an outpost, or perhaps a small town.

This is followed by three chapters from previous publications, all revised and developed to varying degrees: Social challenges from *Karvosti – The Witch Hammer*, Expeditions in Davokar from *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*, and Ceremonial Magic from *Yndaros – The Darkest Star* with lots of new ceremonies. The section ends with a chapter on designing Legendary creatures – monstrosities that are technically classified as Legendary resistance.

The final section of the *Game Master's Guide* covers various forms of rewards that the player characters can receive, in the form of items found or payment from quest givers. This naturally includes traditional treasures such as coins and gems, but most of the content concerns other forms of rewards. It could be knowledge, contacts, pacts, (monstrous) traits, properties, or custom-made greater artifacts – things that leave their mark on the player characters while making their life stories more compelling.

The final two chapters of the book focus on artifacts and their creation; first a chapter with guidelines on creating greater artifacts and finally a chapter describing no fewer than 27 artifacts, each with a unique adventure set-up.

We hope this *Game Master's Guide* will help make your gaming sessions even more entertaining and memorable. And not only that, we hope that being the Game Master for *Symbaroum* will feel more inspiring and rewarding, in the planning phase as well as when running adventures with your friends at the gaming table.

Other Core Books

The content of the *Game Master's Guide* assumes that the reader has access to the *Core Rulebook*, and the previously published *Monster Codex* and *Advanced Player's Guide*. Sure, you will have use for this book even without the latter two, but in that case you will have to develop the content with adjustments and additions of your own making.

The mood was tense, the silence deafening. Father Iona's request to gain entrance into what was obviously the remains of an ancient sun temple had been met with lies about spider symbols and a slumbering darkness. The elves and the Iron Sworn were clearly outnumbered but seemed truthfully ready to die, to fulfill their duty.

"Duty?" Father Iona hissed without breaking eye contact with his counterpart. *"You realize that it is my duty to combat the darkness you speak of, along with all who safeguard the evil, who protect it?"*

The autumn elf returned the hateful gaze with a calm that could be read as both condemning and condescending. *"You have heard it before, I think. But for the sake of your young followers' education: the darkness is already vanquished, by my sisters and brothers; it rests now, in harmless sleep. We are not protecting the dark. We are protecting you. Our world."*

"Never shall the sleeping sinner awake," Iona replied with a sneer. *"Excuses and lies – if you wanted to destroy evil, there is no better way than to kill it in its sleep, with fire and steel!"*

"What can steel do against darkness? And fire, it may be able to banish, never vanquish. But both will undoubtedly awaken. You should know this."

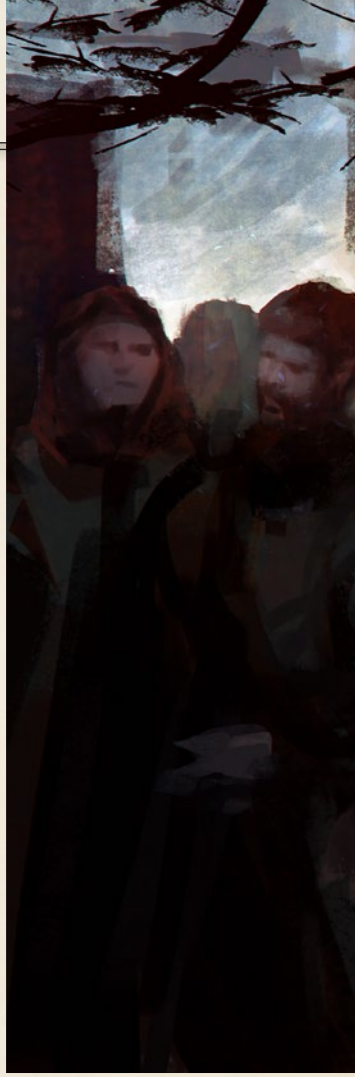
After another moment of breathless silence, Father Iona slowly began shifting a hand towards the hilt of his sword. The Iron Sworn did not move a muscle, though they probably realized that the conversation was over. If they didn't, our brave leader dispersed all doubts as he drew his sword and lit up like a sun in the shadow of the ruin:

"For Prios, the One!"

SECTION 1:

THE ADVENTURE

Building Game Worlds



The Ambrian Sun Church and the Iron Pact represent the extremes in *Symbaroum's* main conflict.

THERE ARE MANY different ways to go about creating worlds for roleplaying games, or geographically limited areas within already established worlds. Consequently, this chapter must not be seen as a step-by-step guide, but rather a set of tips and inspirational ideas based on how we who have written *Symbaroum* usually work. If you take an active and reflective approach to the text, we hope that it will help you hone your skills as a worldbuilder, while at the same time providing insight into how the *Symbaroum* game world was designed.

AS AN INITIAL note, we would argue that the construction of a world well-suited for roleplaying is in many ways similar to the design of the game's rule system. If the rules set the framework for combat, problem solving and character creation, the world becomes a kind of social playing field, with individuals, groups, organizations, and factions, all connected in a structure of conflicts and collaborations, history and future plans, moral principles and practical ideals. Each individual element inevitably interacts with the rest of the system's components, and every time something new is introduced, that individual, group or phenomenon must be suited to the system as a whole. This may sound a bit cryptic, but what it means will hopefully become clearer as you keep reading.

This chapter is divided into three sections – two focusing on what we (for lack of a better term) call building blocks, followed by a discussion on what the creation process itself might be like. The examples and references are mainly to Symbaroum, but we also refer to other roleplaying games we have worked on, as well as to our experiences from other industries, particularly computer games and fiction literature.

Primary Building Blocks

THE DIVISION INTO primary and secondary building blocks has to do with the procedure we try to follow when creating new game worlds. We will come back to the process later in the chapter, but at this point it is worth noting that what we call Theme, Main Conflict, Stories and Tone ought to be discussed and established (even if only in a preliminary fashion) before the building blocks presented in the next section.

THEME

The theme is what the game is fundamentally about. *Symbaroum's* theme could be described as *"the struggle between civilization and nature"* – it is about (mainly) mankind's efforts to cultivate, structure and exploit nature, and how nature is affected by and reacts to this. The fact that the game belongs in the fantasy genre allowed us to clarify the theme by giving *Symbaroum's* nature an obvious ability to respond to what is done to it – in the form of corruption, blight marks, darkening, etcetera.

Other games we have developed and worked on have also had a more or less explicit main theme. The game world of Mutant: Heirs of Doom was in many ways about social injustice, while Coriolis: The Third Horizon was characterized by the meeting of (or struggle between) different cultures. And the reasons we want to keep working this way, are what we see as three important elements of interesting and functional game worlds: the world should be recognizable, consistent and marked by clear conflicts.

Recognition is important for making us who "inhabit" the game world find it interesting, relevant, and worth fighting for – whether we are writers, illustrators, Game Masters or players. For us to feel engaged, the game world must touch on subjects, problems and situations we can identify with and even relate to, if only on a symbolic level, perhaps without even being fully aware of the similarities between the game world and our own. It can be more or less explicit, but if the game is built on a theme which is important to many Game Masters and players, it is more likely that they will find the setting appealing as well.

That the world should be consistent means that there must be a common thread through the creation

Other Conflicts

Note that the existence of a main conflict does not necessarily exclude other potential lines of conflict. For example, there is of course a struggle for power and influence within all societies and organizations, which is why two groups or individuals who agree on the relationship between civilization and nature can still be at odds with one another, competing for higher positions within their faction.

process, which can later be seen in all aspects of the game, preferably from the *Core Rulebook* to even the tiniest one-shot adventure. Not only does this give the game a distinctive character compared to other games; it also creates a feeling that people and things are connected. Another benefit is that this thread helps game designers set priorities and boundaries. No matter its geographical size and population, it is impossible to offer a nuanced and varied description of an entire world, and the theme can help you decide what to embrace and what to leave out (at least for the time being).

Last, but perhaps most important, is what is described in greater detail under the next heading, namely the game world's conflicts. A well-defined theme will point to one or several clear lines of conflict, which in turn can guide you in developing everything from history to geography, religions and ideologies, nations, factions, and finally, particularly important individuals.

MAIN CONFLICT

Conflicts are the backbone of the game world, or perhaps its engine. Or both: its backbone engine.

Conflicts tell the worldbuilder what factions and groups exist in the world, and what they are negotiating and/or fighting for. In other words: the conflicts precede the creation of ideologies, organizations, and other forms of communities.

In *Symbaroum* the theme is (as already mentioned) the struggle between civilization and nature. In its most basic form, this points to a conflict between those who value civilization over nature, and those who take the opposite view; you know these factions as the Ambrians and the elves of the Iron Pact. The conflict also has room for those who seek balance, believing that both extremes are equally important – in the case of Symbaroum, this is represented by the barbarian clans and particularly the Witches.

But those wishing to design a world that is nuanced and believable can hardly stop there: there are just as many conflicts within said groups as there are between them. The Iron Pact's members may all stand for the sanctity of nature, but they can have different ideas about what is and is not included in the concept of "Creation," and they can have different views on which methods are justified when defending nature. The Ambrians are even more heterogeneous in how they relate to the world around them – from the Sun God worshippers who claim humanity's purpose is to *"cultivate God's creations"* (that is, exploit nature as much as possible), through those who see nature as a gift to be nurtured and managed, to those who for various reasons have joined the Iron Pact's more uncompromising stance.

The next section, which is about secondary building blocks, will provide further examples on how the main conflict can be used as a backbone engine while the game world is developed and set in motion, but first we should mention a thing or two about what kind of stories the worldbuilding is meant to facilitate.

STORIES

As a worldbuilder it is important to early on consider what kind of stories the setting should support. Some games are clearly focused on one type of narrative, while others allow for many different stories. Another difference can be seen between games meant to support stories of a certain format (from one-shot scenarios to epic campaigns) and those that open the way for multiple formats. In both cases, *Symbaroum* belongs in the latter category – it is designed for different kinds of stories in different formats.

Sure, in its simplest form, the theme of *Symbaroum* points to stories about *Ambrians violating nature and facing resistance from the Iron Pact,*

Table 1: Examples of Conflicts

CONFLICT	DESCRIPTION
Nature vs Civilization	Groups/individuals have different views on how civilization should relate to nature.
Individualism vs Collectivism	Groups/individuals have different opinions on what should be prioritized – individual rights or the collective good.
Openness vs Isolationism	Groups/individuals have different opinions on strangers in general, particularly their ability to contribute to society.
Tolerance vs Dogmatism	Groups/individuals have different opinions and/or lifestyles, but also differ in how accepting they are of people not part of one's own group.
Progress vs Tradition	Groups/individuals who think everything is great the way it is (or used to be) are pitted against people who desire change/progress without regard for the past.

possibly with the barbarian witches as a mediating/complicating factor. But such a plot can be molded into lots of different stories, large and small – a treasure hunt or exploration mission; a whodunit where a representative of one of the drama's three parties is found murdered; an adventure landscape centered around a logging outpost; a rescue operation or a diplomatic mission aimed at bringing back some captured Ambrians; and so on.

The stories do not necessarily need to be directly linked to the main conflict. Among already published *Symbaroum* adventures, *The Mark of the Beast* and *Fever of the Hunt* are two examples of stories in which the plots are clearly linked to the game's theme. In other cases, this link is more implicit, with key characters belonging to factions that were founded based on the conflict between civilization and nature. Two clear examples of this are the adventures included in *Adventure Pack 3, The Howling of Damned Gods* and *What's Bred in the Bone*, both of which are based on situations caused by the schism within the Ambrian Sun Church. The *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns* is also primarily about the game world's factions and the struggle between them, though the game's theme is the basis on which these factions were created and the episodes are obviously set in a world marked by the game's central conflict.

TONE

As a final primary building block, we would like to briefly touch on the game world's tone or style. With the above points and reasoning in mind, the world of *Symbaroum* could easily be painted in black and white, perhaps portraying the representatives of civilization as greedy and ruthless, and the defenders of nature as kind-hearted heroes. *Symbaroum* can certainly be played that way, but we have opted for a different tone.

Treasure hunters plundering ruins, explorers investigating old tombs, nobles establishing logging outposts, or alchemists refining crops are not evil. The individual or group in question may not be strictly speaking good, but in most cases, they at least perceive themselves as righteous, well-meaning folk. However, their actions can certainly have both "good" and "evil" consequences. A treasure hunt might save the fortune hunter's village from the brink of starvation, but might also cause outbreaks of corruption or attract a vengeful monster from the forest. Similarly, the alchemist's refined crops might contribute to better harvests and fuller bellies, at the cost of darkened soil that becomes infertile or even deadly. The game's stories must take this into account; they must make clear what is at stake and show that the actions of those involved (including the player characters) have both positive and negative consequences.

In addition to the moral gray area that characterizes the game world as a whole, *Symbaroum* contains elements that most people would associate with pure evil. We are not referring to cultists, sorcerers, or Dark Lords – whatever we may think of their actions, the vast majority of them would probably claim to be doing what is right, based on their (twisted) world view and the belief that the end justifies the means. No, in Symbaroum, the unquestionable evil is represented by the Abominations – altogether destructive and ruthless creatures who live only to slaughter and devour. On the other hand, one might ask to what extent these creatures are responsible for their bloody deeds. Perhaps the blame should be put on the individuals, groups or factions who (more or less deliberately) woke and provoked them?

Whatever your answer to this question may be, and no matter how amused you are by such philosophical dilemmas, *Symbaroum* is meant to facilitate the creation of such thought-provoking problems, though you can of course go with simpler, more direct stories if that is your preference. To put it another way, *Symbaroum* is more about the questions than the answers. And above all, we personally think that game worlds where not everything is either black or white are more interesting and entertaining to visit, at least as players around a gaming table.

Genre

Some of you may wonder why we have not yet touched on the subject of the game's, and therefore the world's, genre. The reason is that we just do not find genres particularly useful when it comes to creating game worlds, at least not initially. Simply put, genre is more about presentation than content; the theme, main conflict, and stories we associate with *Symbaroum* could easily be clothed in the garments of other genres.

Now, someone will probably object that genre usually covers more than just the surface, and that is certainly true – science fiction often addresses existential questions, post-apocalypse deals with the matter of human worth, while fantasy is often about the struggle between light and dark, good and evil. But in our opinion, that is not a good reason to let genre guide you in designing a game world – it can provide inspiration and serve as a sounding board, but at a later stage, when creating the secondary building blocks.

Further Reading

The method of building social structures based on conflicts/relations rather than objects is based on post-structuralist theory and method, especially the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Those who want a fairly accessible introduction to the framework can look up his collection of essays titled *Practical Reason – On the Theory of Action*.

Secondary Building Blocks

SO, SYMBAROUM IS meant to offer *nuanced and varied stories of different formats that address the conflict between civilization and nature*. The question is then how the game world should more specifically be designed to achieve this – what is its history, its nature, its cultures and population?

HISTORY

The history of a world is impossible to grasp. Period! The question of whether an objective historiography can even exist is irrelevant; as no one will ever be able to experience or describe the past in its entirety, we must content ourselves with perspectivist portrayals of limited regions, cultures, eras, and so on. This insight is of course highly relevant in the creation and presentation of game worlds, as the worldbuilder most likely cannot design, let alone describe, the history of her creation in exhaustive detail.

Here the theme can help you set boundaries for both thought and text. No matter what game world we are working on, we are initially content with setting out some loosely worded milestones, linked to the game's theme and easy to move around and reshape. In the case of Symbaroum, these milestones were historical examples of civilizations that perished after awaking the retaliating powers of nature; with Coriolis they were periods when various factions/cultures in the three horizons collided, causing a shift in the balance of power.

Only when we have to put the milestones in writing do the details emerge, even for us. It may become necessary when describing the background of an adventure, or a faction or single non-player character's motives for acting a certain way. But we still do not try to provide exhaustive accounts, as it is both impossible and demystifying, and often less relevant than subjective impressions – the present is usually shaped by cultural beings' perception of the past, rather than by objective historical facts.

The section The Return of the Queen on page 16 in the *Symbaroum Core Rulebook* is one example of this: it provides a brief account of the background to one of the game world's most obvious conflicts between civilization and nature. The text could well be fleshed out with more details, other perspectives, and in-depth discussions; it could grow into a separate book in itself, or even a whole series of hefty tomes. But it already serves its purpose of establishing the game's theme and main conflict in a clear and concise way.

NATURE

Nature and its properties are essential to all forms of game worlds. What matters most is not what it looks, smells, or sounds like, but what resources it contains and in what concentrations. The history of our own world can (at least from a certain perspective) be understood as a struggle for natural resources – land, mountains, water, and what they provide.

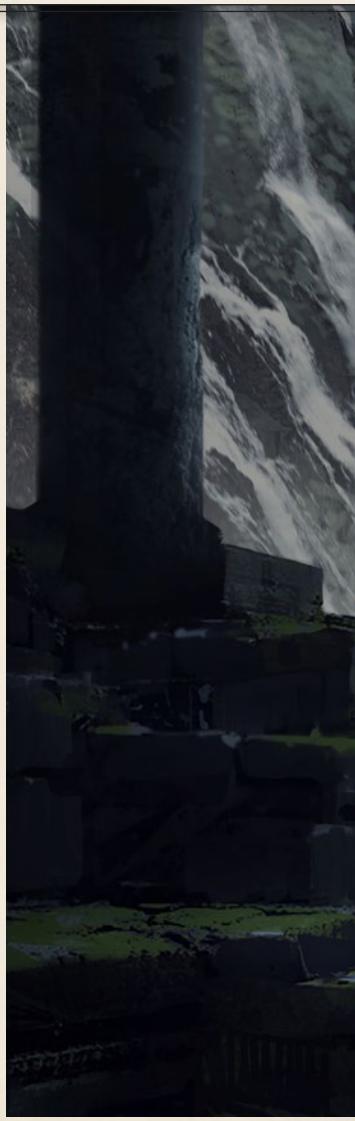
Again, we would advise the worldbuilder to make decisions about her creation's nature based on the game's theme and main conflict. A game like Mutant: Year Zero would not be the same if the world was rich with natural resources and fresh water; *Symbaroum* would be something completely different without the vast wilds of Davokar and the corruption generated by cultural beings' violence against nature. Nature is of course particularly important in *Symbaroum* – the theme requires it to be lush and florid, but also able to "fight for its cause" in various ways, even though the Ironsworn are committed to helping on that front.

Aside from the theme, the world's nature should be designed according to the stories that will take place there. If *Symbaroum* were only meant for treasure hunting and exploring the forests, its world could have focused solely on Davokar and Thistle Hold – without Ambria's towns and farmlands, the rolling plains of the west, and the wild mountain ranges of the south and east. The fact that the Davokar region is landlocked was also a deliberate decision. Although long distance travel is also possible on land, we hope that this design makes the game world feel more isolated and intimate, with less inflow of people, goods, and news from distant shores. Perhaps it also dampens the player characters' (and the players') desire to fantasize about what lies "beyond the sea" or out there on the big blue, so the story can focus on the fates of Ambria and Davokar.

CULTURES

By "cultures" we mean realms, clans, and other clearly defined peoples and communities characterized by shared values and a dominant lifestyle. It has been said before but bears repeating that all such societies are heterogeneous – they contain lots of deviations and variations in terms of lifestyles, values and norms. Nevertheless, in order to describe a world we must stoop to certain simplifications and generalizations, while being aware that this is the case.

With the theme and main conflict as a basis, it can be wise to create two cultures that together



The game world's nature is both enchantingly beautiful and terribly dark, and also full of desirable resources.

describe both extremes of the central conflict. In Symbaroum, these are the Ambrians and the Iron Pact; in Coriolis, the Zenithians and the Firstcome are presented as the two dominant, and quarreling, cultures. In contrast to these factions, both worlds contain groups that, while linked to the main conflict, are more nuanced in their stances – for example the Witches and Reformists in Symbaroum, or The Legion and the Free League in Coriolis.

Another piece of advice is to create a clear cultural center for each respective culture, a place where that culture holds a dominant position and where one can (at least sometimes) encounter its leading officials. The Zenithian Hegemony reigns on the planet Kua, where its leader Abarren Quassar can be found. Similarly, the Iron Pact and its Prince are based in the Halls of a Thousand Tears, and the Witches with the Huldra and her helpers on Karvosti. This gives these places a distinct character, which is also linked to the game's theme.

POPULATION

Finally, a few words on the members of the aforementioned cultures, the game world's individual inhabitants. Even if they are, formally or informally, allied to one or several of the groups, these people can be very different from each other in a number of ways – they can be more or less orthodox, loyal to and invested in the group or faction's cause. And, of course, things happen in life that have short- or long-term effects on their motivations. A person whose family member becomes seriously ill, who is threatened, blackmailed, indebted, or addicted, can quickly turn from loyalist to traitor. The same thing can happen if they are mistreated by their superiors, or if their side in a vital conflict appears to be losing.

When creating an individual non-player character, we usually consider four main questions: a) what does the individual want to achieve?, b) what resources/means does she have at her disposal?,

Representation

Regarding the game world's population, we strongly recommend that the worldbuilder is ever vigilant about differences and power relations from our own world spilling over into his or her creation. A common example has to do with gender power structures, such as those that exist in our own world, slipping into that of the game. The game's theme may of course justify such a world order, especially if it is specifically about shedding light on problems inherent with that kind of power structure (like in the tv-series The Handmaid's Tale). But we fundamentally believe that game worlds should challenge stereotypes rather than reinforce them – they should feel open and welcoming to as many people as possible!

c) what compromises is she willing to make?, d) what risks is she prepared to take? Group affiliation is central to answering these questions, but it is far from everything – the faction/culture at large fights for a common cause; the individual fights mostly for herself and her loved ones, and if the group's cause becomes a threat to the individual, her convictions and loyalties can quickly start to fall apart. Note that the same logic (albeit in a simpler form) can be applied to the game world's more bestial inhabitants, with the exception of the raging abominations who essentially lack any sense of self-preservation or herd instinct.

Since *Symbaroum* is meant to be played as a campaign, over a long period of time, we should also point out how important it is for non-player characters to change. Allowing individuals to develop over time makes the world come alive, which is important enough. It is also a great way to mirror the world's development in general, to give face and voice to the changed relations within and between the major factions. The Templars seceding from the Curia and establishing the Church of Dead Prios (see *Karvosti – The Witch Hammer*, page 44) can for example be reflected in a knight choosing to join the vengeful quest of the First Revenger, or leaving the group to join the Black Cloaks or the Reformists instead, or even hanging up her sword once and for all. A group of player characters who encounter the knight in question, before and after the Templars' break from the Curia, will then gain a clear insight into the overall development of the game world and how it is affecting individual people.

The Process

WE READILY ADMIT that we who work on *Symbaroum* have never formulated any clear strategy for how to develop new game worlds – perhaps because we have known each other and roleplayed together for more than three decades and thereby developed some form of instinctive work process. Consequently, this section will be something of an afterthought, but we hope the reasoning below will still offer some concrete advice and tips, whether you wish to create your own world or a limited adventure landscape in Ambria or Davokar.

CONCEPT

It is not easy to understand or explain where the idea for a game comes from, nor why some ideas take root and others do not. One of our primary starting points is always to create games we would like to play ourselves, which is why we often build on past roleplaying experience we have shared together. Mutant: Heirs of Doom was based on our way of playing previous versions of Mutant, and that was also the case with *Symbaroum* – we wanted to make a game that focused on our way of playing older versions of the Swedish fantasy RPG Drakar och Demoner ("Dragons and Daemons").

But what should the game be about, and what should it look like – in other words: how should we turn the idea into a concept? After many long and sprawling discussions, we devoted a full day to gathering inspiration in the form of images – images that were discussed, discarded, or saved for future reference. During this process, the game's graphic style started to take form, but not only that; the theme was defined, the main conflict was clarified, different types of stories came up in our conversations, and both the style and the theme suggested what tone we wanted to adopt. The secondary building blocks were addressed as well, and what would eventually become the Ambrians, the Iron Pact, and the barbarian witches started to take form.

If memory serves, we had probably started writing and painting a bit before then, but the inspiration from that day gave a clear direction to our work. We kept bouncing drafts off each other, discussing and critiquing each other's work, and our initial ideas changed and developed. But in many ways that day of inspiration marked the birth of *Symbaroum* – the moment when the presentation started to take form.

PRESENTATION

As stated in the preface of the *Advanced Player's Guide*, the process of creating a game (or other cultural artifacts) is as painful as it is pleasurable. Every act of creation is as much about chastening as it is about generating – about prioritizing, limiting and choosing what to leave out. Leaving aside the rules for a bit and focusing on the game world, we had to decide how much of its history, culture, geography and population should be described, and what should be given priority. And in this decision-making process, the theme – the conflict between civilization and nature – was an invaluable pillar to lean on.

For every event, faction, location and individual we asked (more or less consciously) the question: are you necessary in establishing the game's theme, main conflict, narrative style, and tone? Some elements may have gotten off lightly in the elimination

process, because they were particularly close to our hearts. To be fair, one should probably not be completely rigid or unforgiving when picking and choosing; at the end of the day, it is about creating a solid base that we as game designers, as well as future Game Masters, can manage and build on in order to create engaging roleplaying experiences for all involved.

Before moving on to the issue of management and expansion, we would like to pause for a moment to consider the importance of always thinking in terms of differences – to, in line with the reasoning regarding theme and main conflict, design (and describe) different phenomena in relation to one another. The social playing field consists of contrasts; what may seem like an individual element always gains its characteristics in relation to everything else. This may sound vague, but it simply means that a person who is tall in one social group can be short in another, or that what is a fancy tavern in one town can be a mediocre old kitchen in another.

In practice, it is of course impossible to describe every detail in relation to "everything else." It is more about a mindset and approach that can only have a modest impact on the presentation. One example of how we try to apply this focus on contrasts in writing is the descriptions of different people and establishments in the episodes that make up the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*. When deciding which eating and drinking establishments to describe, we always create four or five that are distinctly different from each other, like on page 16–20 in *Yndaros – The Darkest Star*. When writing about these places we then try to set them in relation to other, similar establishments, as exemplified by the first sentence in the description of the tavern called The Croft: *"If the Town Hall's Loft and the Davokar Feastery are described as upscale taverns, the Croft must be placed at the other end of the scale."* This hopefully conveys a feeling that people and places are connected, that they are what they are in relation to one another. Such comparative descriptions also add some depth to the world they are in.

On a related note, we must mention the importance of thinking in nuances. Viewed from the outside, the inhabitants of one of Davokar's troll communities may seem very similar, but if asked about it, one of them could immediately point out a large number of groups whose collective memberships differ greatly from each other. Take a closer look at one of these groups and the same thing happens again, and so on, down to individual level. And it does not stop there, as the individual's characteristics (as mentioned earlier) change over time, depending on the environment she is in.

In addition to making the individuals more interesting and less predictable, such nuances also make the game world as a whole feel more alive, perhaps even more "real." It becomes a world populated by people rather than stereotypes, with unique and changing locations rather than stage sets. While this may be desirable in itself, it also fits nicely with the tone we think should characterize Symbaroum.

MANAGEMENT

The following truth will be repeated many times in this book: the world of *Symbaroum* does not belong to us, but to you, to everyone! The same is true for other games we have worked on. The great thing about roleplaying games is that, unlike video games, novels, and movies, they are characterized by collective storytelling and creation. The fact that we have designed a world based on certain building blocks does not mean the whole world will collapse just because the blocks in question are replaced, reshaped or rearranged.

Our ambition is to keep discovering and presenting the world of *Symbaroum* little by little, as new adventure modules and supplements are published. We are building one region at a time and developing their secondary building blocks when we get there, tailoring the presentation to the needs of that particular place and its stories. And it is important to achieve variation between the regions, within the framework laid down by the game's primary building blocks. The theme can be more or less prominent, the power balance between the parties involved in the main conflict can vary, and the environments can be suited for different kinds of stories – urban adventures, forest expeditions, mysteries, action, rescue operations, stories focused on revenge and violent confrontations... the options are limitless.

And you are free to do the same. You can even go one step further and create regions that follow an entirely different theme, characterized by a main conflict you personally are passionate about exploring. As soon as our adventure modules and other supplements leave the presses and begin their journey to stores and retailers, they cease to describe our worldbuilding and become toolboxes for you to use in any way you like – some choose to follow our instructions, while others ignore them completely. This is the way it is, and the way it should be. This is what makes roleplaying the greatest leisure activity in the world!

Contrasts

We humans perceive the world around us in the form of differences. We see items because they stand out from other indistinguishable objects in the environment; we hear a specific sound because it differs from the rest of the soundscape; the same goes for our other senses – smell, taste and touch. A game world that is completely dark and gloomy risks being perceived as gray; in a world where everyone is cruel, no one is in fact cruel – we need light to perceive the dark, happiness to perceive misery, and mercy to perceive cruelty. As far as the presentation is concerned, contrast is the game designer's best friend.

Adventure Chronicles

A WHOLE BOOK, if not two, could be written about the creation of adventure chronicles. In this chapter we will nevertheless attempt to summarize what we believe are important lessons we have learned from working on Heirs of Doom, *The Throne of Thorns*, and to a certain extent Mercy of the Icons for Coriolis. We will also make references to The Copper Crown, as an example of how chronicles do not always have to span hundreds of pages and hundreds of thousands of words.

What Characterizes a Chronicle?

NONE OF US are particularly interested in discussing semantics, trying to clear up what this or that term "actually" means – it can go on for days without leading to a common understanding, as the words used in the discussion are themselves subject to interpretation. For this reason we will simply try to explain what we mean by "adventure chronicle."

A SERIES OF ADVENTURES

A chronicle consists of a series of thematically linked adventures, which all foreshadow the chronicle's finale. The adventures must be at least three in number, but do not have to be played back-to-back. On the contrary, we recommend that each of the chronicle's episodes be designed with an open ending that points the way to the next episode, but leaves room for the player characters to pursue other interests in between. Sure, if you create the chronicle for personal use and have the whole thing finished before the game begins, it is perfectly possible to create a more direct link between the episodes. But if your episodes (like ours) are written or published some time apart, it may be wise not to leave the player characters hanging until the next book comes out.

A NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Chronicles follow a structure similar to that of classic adventures (page 191–192 in the *Core Rulebook*), but on a larger scale. In the build-up to the turning point, the story is largely about

getting to know the chronicle's cast of characters, understanding their relationships and conflicts, and realizing what is at stake. After the turning point, the player characters know what must be done, and so the journey toward the more or less bombastic conclusion begins, and turns out to be lined with many difficult challenges. For more on this, see The Course of the Chronicle below.

A FATEFUL THEME

On this point there may of course be certain variations, but the outcome of a chronicle should have serious consequences for a large number of cultural beings – the stakes are high, in terms of life or death, suffering or relief, starvation or abundance. It could affect the fate of the whole world, or the future of a specific nation, region or people. Whatever the scale, the players should feel that their characters have a considerable responsibility, and that their actions have a real impact on the world/region/people's living conditions.

A CHANGING WORLD

During the chronicle, the player characters cannot be everywhere at the same time, but that does not mean the rest of the world is standing still. Think about how different groups are acting, internally and toward each other, and compile a list of important events and changes in the balance of power or the groups' internal composition.

How you later convey this to the players and their characters may vary: some things can be told in an introductory narrative before a game session, other things can be learned from non-player characters they encounter, and in other cases they may see the effects of what happened directly – streams of refugees, burnt-down villages or thoroughly corrupted woods.

RECURRING ROLES

Who does not love to hate an archenemy? Who is not happy to be reunited with the person who once saved one's life or helped solve an impossible problem? Any chronicle of merit needs recurring characters to help tie the episodes together and add depth to the story.

Or should we say "recurring individuals"? That these individuals, and their roles in the chronicle, are allowed to change is something we strongly recommend. It could be everything from a cheerful innkeeper whose mind is darkened by a personal tragedy, to a sworn enemy who sees the error of her ways and suddenly offers to join the player characters' cause. Or vice versa. Few things stir up more emotion than a dear friend and confidant suddenly being revealed as an enemy agent...

Make the World Your Own

Before we move on, we would like to reiterate the importance of making the game world your own. Whether you create your own Symbaroum chronicle or use the episodes of *the Throne of Thorns* or the Copper Crown, you should always assume the right to change, add and remove as you see fit. In the latter case, this could cause information in future episodes of the chronicle to deviate from how things have developed in your particular game world. But such problems are easily remedied by changing, adding and removing.

The First Adventure

THE FIRST EPISODE of the chronicle must introduce the players to the story in a way that makes them hungry for more – more to know, more to do. If you are writing your own chronicle for personal use, you probably know your players well enough to understand what they find entertaining and engaging, and if you are Game Mastering a predesigned adventure series it is important to adjust it with that knowledge in mind.

ESTABLISH THE PLOT

Besides the fact that the first episode must have a plot that is interesting and engaging in and of itself, it should also establish what the chronicle as a whole is about. It should not reveal exactly how and/or where the climax of the final episode will take place; it is important to maintain the suspense that comes from suspecting but not knowing, to have an idea but not fully understand. A guideline could be that, after completing the first adventure, the players and their characters should have a clear picture of the chronicle's main conflict and know the story's most important operators well enough to imagine how the story might end.

In *Wrath of the Warden*, the first episode of *the Throne of Thorns*, we tried to accomplish precisely this. The adventure's plot is directly linked to the game's theme: an Ambrian who in search of power uses violence against a nature spirit, which causes the forces of nature to retaliate and rouses the Iron Pact's agents to action. But in order to identify and neutralize this threat, the player characters must interact with several of the factions involved in the chronicle's main conflict: the struggle for dominance over the Davokar region and its inhabitants.

This becomes particularly clear when the Queen's representatives hire the player characters to steal a politically sensitive copper plate from the agents of the Sun Church, but it shines through in other places as well – in meetings with victims of Ambria's conquests (the Beast Clan); in conversations with the living Lightbringer Deseba the Old, which hints at the schism within the Church of Prios; during the visit to the Halls of a Thousand Tears, where the player characters get a glimpse of what dark forces the power struggle might awaken.

ANTAGONISTS

The first adventure should introduce all groups who will come to play important roles in the chronicle. If there are many different factions, some may be less prominent in the story than others, but it should still be possible to encounter all of them, if only in passing. Furthermore, we recommend that the player characters are initially introduced to the groups' less prominent representatives, but learn the names of their leaders and top agents. Some exceptions can be made, so the players feel early on that their characters have a role to play in the forthcoming struggle.

It is essential that these encounters give the player characters an idea of what the factions want to achieve, how they relate to each other, and what their internal power balance is like. The information obtained does not have to be true – the minions could lie, express hopes rather than facts, or simply be uninformed about the political game being played above their heads. The important thing is to make it clear that the factions have very different ambitions and that the future might therefore look very different depending on who emerges victorious from the power struggle.

Wrath of the Warden involves all factions featured in *The Throne of Thorns*. The Witches can even serve as the player characters' quest givers, while House Kohinoor, the Priesthood, the Sun Knights, and the Iron Pact appear in different missions. The Sacred of the Old Blood are behind the adventure's plot, without revealing themselves to the players other than in rumors and speculations, and the Sovereign's Oath plays an even smaller part – they only appear in the adventure seed The Blood Daughter, and it is up to the Game Master to decide whether the representatives of the Sovereign's Oath should be introduced to the players before they take center stage in the chronicle's second adventure, *The Witch Hammer*.

In *Wrath of the Warden* the player characters are only able to encounter underlings of the factions' most prominent leaders, with two shining exceptions. When dealing with the Witches they will not meet the Huldra herself, but a pair of her closest advisors, Gadramon and Eferneya. The second exception is Deseba the Old and Father Sarvola – two characters who at the time of the meeting have a toned-down role within the Sun Church, but who will grow in power and esteem over the course of the chronicle.

And speaking of recurring roles, we have also taken the opportunity to plant a couple of future antagonists in *Wrath of the Warden*: Kullinan Furia who is the main antagonist in *Yndaros – The Darkest Star*, and Agramai Kalfas (a.k.a. the Prince) who steps out of the shadows in *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*. The player characters have a chance to encounter both of them during their adventure in Thistle Hold, and in the former case carry out a mission alongside their future foe.

Design Premise 1: Incentives

When designing adventures and chronicles to be played by others, the challenge is to make them flexible enough to be playable in many different ways – particularly in a game world such as Symbaroum, where it is difficult to know in advance what goals and alliances the player characters will have – they may just as well be aligned with the Queen of Ambria as with the Iron Pact. Our solution is to have our adventures provide the gaming group with a number of different incentives/motivations to choose from, but as Game Master with a given group of player characters you are always free to tailor the adventure to their specific goals and ambitions.

From a Game Master's perspective it can sometimes, despite our best efforts, be a challenge to provide all characters (and players) with solid incentives for engaging in premade scenarios. Our primary suggestion on this issue is to make the incentives into the concern of the entire gaming group, not only the Game Master.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the adventure or chronicle, bring up the topic with the players. If the discussion takes place before player characters have been created, the incentives can provide a point of departure in the creation process and be reflected in their goals, individually and as a group. And should you already have a party of characters, the respective players will surely have some thoughts on what will motivate them to take on a certain problem or solve a specific mystery.

Note that the incentives do not always have to be personally and directly grounded; the important thing is that taking part in the adventure moves the character closer to his or her goal. A character whose aim is to seek revenge on a particular faction, family or person, may not be given an opportunity for this in every scenario – instead the adventure may offer information, contacts and other resources that indirectly contribute to the main goal.

FORESHADOW THE GRAND

We think it may be unwise to roll out the big guns straight away and let the player characters experience the game world's grand events and phenomena in the very first adventure. Sure, the beginning should also evoke feelings of wonder and grandeur, but we still recommend holding back a bit – otherwise the epic elements may not affect the players as strongly the second time around.

Our guiding principle is usually to put the player characters in situations that foreshadow the mysterious and the wondrous. They could hear about it, read eyewitness accounts from the place or from encounters with the person/creature, maybe find maps or mosaics depicting the phenomenon

Wyrtha, Wielda and Wratha

The barbarian legend recounted to the right gives voice to an allegory describing the basic design of the world. As such, it also mirrors the theme and main conflict of the *Symbaroum* game world – the struggle between civilization and nature.

THUS SPOKE AROALETA

"... and at the dawn of days was Wyrtha, the power that creates.
Where Nothing had reigned supreme, Wyrhta gave life to All;
shaped here and there, spawned now and then,
formed the one and in chorus the other.
And where attraction arose,
the wild thrived and multiplied...

... but out of the untamed Wielda appeared, the power that rules:
the power of willful violence, that bends here and there,
that curves now and then according to ideals and cravings;
that harvests the one and rejects the other.
With time, Wielda's appetite grew,
and the birth was inevitable...

... because violence begets hate begets Wratha, the power that reacts.
Born of Wielda's hunger for Wyrhta's design, Wratha is everywhere and nowhere,
always close where mother meets mother,
always mounting in strength with the force of the violence.
The arrival of the black fruit is fated,
as inescapable as terrible...

... and it happens, has happened, will happen again,
that Wratha grows boundless, furious, blind in her hunger.
It happens that the blackness grows flesh and spirit and the sharpest of claws,
that the fruit sheds seeds that poison the first,
in the aim to suppress the second.
Then dies All..."

in question, without actually facing it themselves. Presented correctly, this gives the players something to look forward to, to long and strive for – or something to fear and try to avoid.

A large sinkhole opening in central Thistle Hold, with twisted Beast Clan warriors storming up from the deep, may of course be considered a grand event, as could the sight of the Huldra's closest associates approaching the town on their enormous colossi. Perhaps the visit to the cells underneath Thistle Hold's sun temple will also fill the player characters with a sense of wonder, but these situations are still relatively modest compared to what happens in later episodes.

The clearest examples of situations in *Wrath of the Warden* that foreshadow the grander events are of course the visits to the Halls of a Thousand Tears and the limited part of the Underworld that can be reached through the sinkhole. In the former case, the player characters find a sketch map with cryptic notes, and later get to visit what is best described as the halls' antechamber. As for the Underworld, they are introduced to its existence, its blight, and its nature with both water and vegetation. Naturally, the player characters will have reason to return to both of these places later in the chronicle and experience them in all their splendor.

The Chronicle's Title

The chronicle's title is important when it comes to foreshadowing its main plot. With the title "*The Throne of Thorns*" we wanted to signal that the adventure chronicle is about a power struggle, for which we laid the groundwork all the way back in the *Core Rulebook*, where the legendary high seat is presented as a symbol of power and influence over the region and its people. Hopefully, this will help direct and fuel the players' ideas about what is to come.

The Course of the Chronicle

ASIDE FROM THE rising grandeur and deepened understanding that have already been mentioned, there are a number of points we usually bear in mind when it comes to the chronicle's middle section, whether it consists of one or multiple episodes.

The first and most important thing is of course to progress toward the chronicle's conclusion, step-by-step, as the player characters learn more and more about the main conflict, the parties involved, and what is at stake. Here it may be a good idea to outline a rough course of events at an early stage, laying out when and how the characters can obtain information that allows them to approach the situation in a new way, from a different perspective, or that leads to a new place or trail.

Each such point can mark the end of an adventure, or (if they are numerous enough) be divided into groups of two or three when creating scenarios with multiple turning points. In *Symbaroum's* great chronicle, the middle adventures' points are directly related to *the Throne of Thorns* and its (assumed) location, the ruined city of Symbar. *The Witch Hammer* ends with the trails leading to the ruins of the city state Lindaros underneath Yndaros; at the end of *The Darkest Star*, the player characters (and others) obtain directions to Symbar, and so on.

Aside from all this, we believe that the following is important to keep in mind.

DYNAMICS

Some gaming groups may always want lots of action and a fast pace, and others might want every scenario to be a whodunit-style mystery, but we would still suggest that you try to make the story dynamic in several senses. We always opt to alternate fast-paced scenes with periods of rest, discussion, and reflection; action with less stressful problem solving or information gathering; linear stories with open, player-driven landscapes.

As mentioned earlier, regarding contrasts, there is a significant risk that your gaming sessions will feel like a big gray mass unless the dynamics change from time to time. Perhaps it would be best if all adventures contain a bit of everything, but have a different focus. *Mark of the Beast* is mostly a linear, slow-burning murder mystery focused on problem solving, but also has elements of action and room for the player characters to take their own initiatives. *Tomb of Dying Dreams* can be described as its opposite: an adventure landscape with lots of potential for action and combat, but with possibilities to slow down during negotiations and investigations.

Also remember to leave some room for recovery between adventures, so both the players and their characters get a chance to reflect on and learn from what has happened. This adds further weight to our suggestion that the player characters should not be forced to go directly from one adventure to the next. Sure, so called "cliffhangers" have their dramatic uses, but are perhaps best employed within the framework of an adventure, between one encounter and another.

THEMATIC VARIATION

Another good technique for designers is to strive for variation with regard to antagonists and theme. Try to find different angles on the chronicle's main conflict, where each of the game world's factions have a more or less prominent role. This gives the player characters a chance to learn more about the parties involved – their resources, methods, willingness to compromise, etcetera – but also means that, because of the

The Throne of Thorns – Campaign Overview

Those who want to know more about the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns* can download the eBook *The Throne of Thorns – Campaign Overview* free of charge from the *Symbaroum* page on the Free League website [www.freeleaguepublishing.com].

differences inherent to each faction, they will probably have to learn how to handle different types of tactical challenges.

In *the Throne of Thorns* we have mainly tried to give all factions their share of the spotlight within the framework of the chronicle's episodes, but also left things relatively open in terms of who could be standing in the player characters' way. The reason for this is, again, that we cannot assume that the characters will have certain friends and enemies, or that their alliances will stay the same throughout the chronicle.

For example, in *Karvosti – The Witch Hammer* it is up to the Game Master to decide (randomly or strategically) which factions appear in the various adventure landscapes, while *Symbar – Mother of Darkness* leaves it to the players to form alliances or try to make it on their own. In cases where the adventure involves a clearly defined enemy, *the Throne of Thorns* introduces people that are independent from the factions, such as Erlaber Ambreagos in *Wrath of the Warden* and Kullinan Furia in *The Darkest Star*.

On Downtime

When designing (or leading) an adventure chronicle, it is always important to leave room for so called downtime, that is, time for the characters to engage in other activities besides adventuring. This gives the players a chance to develop their characters, rules-wise and in other respects.

Concerning the rules, there are for starters some abilities that are meant to be used during downtime, in the form of *Alchemy*, *Blacksmith* and *Artifact Crafting*. Moreover, it is not until the character has time to relax (during or between adventures) that accumulated *Experience* can be exchanged for new (or higher levels in) abilities, powers and boons – something which in all likelihood requires time spent with a teacher or in a dusty old archive. It is also possible for a player character to be employed by a person or organization, own an establishment of their own (see the boon *Enterprise* on page 53 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*) or have a family that require attention and effort. And within this book, you will find guidelines on the management of a Domain (page 76), which can turn into a very time-consuming business.

TURNING POINT

For chronicles spanning more than three normal-length adventures we recommend that the story reaches at least one crescendo (or climax) on the way to the conclusion – an epic turning point when the player characters think they have achieved an important objective, only to realize that their problems are far from over; a great victory or terrible defeat that only turns out to give them a new chance to prove their mettle.

The Throne of Thorns' turning point occurs in its fourth episode, when the player characters finally reach the legendary city of Symbar. What they learn in the ruined capital of the fallen empire is probably best not to reveal in this book, but it is safe to say that the story does not end there.

The trail leads back to Lindaros and onward to the former nemesis of Ambria: the Dark Lord's native land of Lyastra – there are still many adventures to be had!

WORLD DEVELOPMENTS

One thing you must never forget over the course of the chronicle is what happens in various parts of the game world while the player characters are absent. The events that occur during their adventures will likely cause ripples, at least in places where the factions have some degree of influence. Furthermore, it is likely that rumors and news will reach common folk in villages, settlements and outposts. If a faction should suffer a crushing defeat or achieve a glorious triumph, the news would undoubtedly spread to many parts of the world, and if the player characters had a hand in what happened, they might very well gain a reputation.

Our suggestion, whether you are game mastering *The Throne of Thorns* or some other campaign, is that after every major world event you take some time to consider what short- and long-term consequences it will have. Perhaps a leading figure is fired from her position; perhaps that person decides to take revenge on those responsible? Perhaps there is a shift in a specific faction's internal relations, so the success/defeat in question leaves it more divided or united than before? And how will the general public react to what is happening? Under the right circumstances even losers can become winners, if the defeat results in greater support from the public.

These considerations should include the player characters and their part in the drama. On page 108 in the *Advanced Player's Guide* there is a section specifically about reputation, which can offer some guidance in this regard. But even for gaming groups who would rather not immerse themselves in the social game, it can be good for the characters' actions to have consequences – perhaps something as simple as being banned from an inn because they oppose a faction represented by the innkeeper, or being offered a discount if the opposite is the case.

The Climax of the Chronicle

How do you give your adventure chronicle a worthy climax? There are probably as many answers to that question as there are gaming groups in the world, or close to it.

When discussing this, we are often in complete agreement about certain things. The first and most important is that the player characters should bear significant responsibility for, and influence over, the outcome – they should be the ones who decide how the whole thing ends, or at least have a real chance of steering the outcome in a desirable direction. Secondly, no one questions how important it is for the climax to take place in a marvelous place and involve opponents and potential allies who are a) powerful in every sense of the word, and b) well known to the player characters, ideally sharing a more or less checkered past.

Additionally, we would like to give you the following pieces of advice.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

You would do best to make sure that the social playing field is not too complicated in the run-up to the final confrontation. The chronicle can feature a large number of groups, many of which want roughly the same thing but serve different leaders, with different methods and resources. But more and more of these should drop away the closer you get to the ending – they could simply be wiped out, band together, or decide to put their ambitions on hold.

This has the benefit of making the main conflict particularly clear; suddenly the battle is between two or three combatants with clear and distinct goals. The player characters could be one of these or act as a wild card, with the power to tip the scales one way or the other (or in a different direction altogether).

In the Chronicle of *the Throne of Thorns*, the Game Master will be given influence over which groups will participate in the ultimate struggle for power over the Davokar region, and the player characters' actions will likely have a certain impact as well. But no matter which factions are left standing to take part in the final showdown, each of them should represent a different side of the main conflict: one fighting for civilization's right to dominate nature, one striving to liberate nature from the yoke of civilization, and one who believes that a balance can be struck and maintained – three mutually exclusive positions that leave no room for compromise!

EPIC SCENERY

Perhaps it goes without saying, but it is too important not to highlight: the chronicle's conclusion deserves an epic scene, or maybe a whole series of them.

We are not saying they have to be a certain way, but that the setting should be significant – it should symbolize the main conflict of the chronicle, be historically linked to the conflict, and feel impressive. The latter is of course a matter of taste, but you have to admit that The Lord of the Rings' climax would not be the same if the Ring of Power had been forged in a small smithy in the idyllic countryside of the Shire.

At the time of writing, it is not entirely clear where *The Throne of Thorns* will reach its epic finale. We have a fairly good idea, but want to keep it to ourselves for now. Unfortunately, the same applies to the Coriolis campaign, Mercy of the Icons. So unless you are versed in Swedish and have read about the final battle of the Mutant: Heirs of Doom campaign, set on the roof terrace of the Dawn Palace in Hindenburg, we are unable to point you towards a specific example.

CONSIDERABLE RISK

The chronicle's climax should involve a life-or-death struggle where both outcomes are just as likely, or where the risk of dying is even greater than the chance of survival. There are two points to this – first, few things will ruin the experience and memory of a chronicle more than a final battle that is too easy to win; second, the players will feel a greater sense of triumph if they succeed in the face of tremendous adversity.

The latter is not only a matter of providing the opponents with high stats and powerful artifacts. Rather, it is about staging a series of simple, strategic challenges combined with appropriate resistance. It is a difficult balancing act – too easy and there is a considerable risk of an anticlimax (as above); too complicated, and immersion may be broken by prolonged discussions about tactics and how to interpret the rules.

This all takes a great deal of mental effort, but also a good understanding of the players and their specific characters – what abilities, items and stats they have; which tactics they normally use. It is therefore hard to offer blanket advice on this matter, other than by referring to the guidelines for Balanced Combat Resistance on page 178 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* and the Adventures for Heroes section in this book (page 31).

Adventure Landscapes

IN THE GAME Master's section of the *Core Rulebook*, we describe two ways of designing adventures for Symbaroum: Classic Adventure and Adventure Landscape. In hindsight we feel that the introduction to classic adventures should suffice in its present form, but there is more that can be said about adventure landscapes. Hopefully, this chapter will also offer further examples of how the game world's building blocks (from Chapter 1) can be helpful in creating captivating adventures.

THIS CHAPTER CAN be described as a kind of template for designing and writing adventure landscapes. According to the template, the landscape consists of an overview (referred to below as Plot) that broadly introduces the adventure, followed by a setting (Location), a few individuals with their own personal ambitions (Non-Player Characters), and a dramatic event (Inciting Incident) that sets the plot in motion. After that it is up to the players to act based on their characters' goals and values.

As support for future gaming, we would also urge the Game Master to outline a number of ideas for what happens after the adventure (Developments), but whether this is necessary or even desirable is for the Game Master to decide – some probably prefer to let go of the reigns once the basic framework has been introduced to the players. The same goes for the recommendation to add "that little extra" in the form of a new rule, artifact, ritual, elixir, etcetera; something unique for the player characters to take with them from the adventure.

Before addressing the design components, we should mention that adventure landscapes in general (and this template in particular) can be particularly suitable for one-shot adventures, which is why we have chosen the scenario *Blight Night* as a recurring example. However, this is a guideline worth challenging or at least discussing, as adventure landscapes may just as well function as parts in huge chronicles – as, for instance, the vast adventure landscape opening up to the player characters in *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*.

Blight Night

The adventure *Blight Night* is included in the booklet *Adventure Pack 1*, which accompanied one of the earlier versions of the Game Master's Screen and can still be purchased as an eBook from (among others) DriveThruRPG. The scenario itself can also be downloaded for free, as it is included as an example adventure in *Symbaroum – Quick Start*, available as a PDF at the Free League webstore [frialigan.se/en/store].

Plot

THE FIRST QUESTION is of course what the landscape should be about. Should it be directly linked to *Symbaroum's* theme, perhaps involving a ruin abundant with treasures and darkness, under the protection of the Iron Pact – a ruin the player characters can seek out as treasure hunters or to stop another expedition from awakening its darkness? Perhaps a more indirect link is preferable, for example a village or outpost terrorized by an elusive predator that has been attracted to the place by returning fortune hunters?

Either way, we recommend that you write a broad overview of the adventure – its conflict and involved parties. Also, make a few notes about how the player characters could become involved and engaged in the scenario. Perhaps a friend or relative is in urgent need of their help; perhaps they are formally hired by someone to investigate the place; or maybe they end up there by coincidence and are drawn into the plot more or less against their will.

EXAMPLE: BLIGHT NIGHT

The plot of the adventure *Blight Night* is indirectly linked to the struggle between Civilization and Nature. It is about a person (the robber baron Nightblade) who has plunderd ruins in Davokar and become increasingly tainted by corruption, so much so that she is close to turning into a howling abomination: her blood red eyes already glow unnaturally in the dark, and she is constantly surrounded by a stench of brimstone and doom. In her desperation, Nightblade hopes to find some Water of the Dusk (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 186) to cleanse her body of corruption, and she is prepared to go very far to reach her goal!

The player characters are drawn into the story when they happen to come between the blight-stricken knight and the Water of the Dusk – they must decide whether to stand and fight or to flee and thereby leave a large number of innocent people to a slow and painful death.

Location

AN ADVENTURE LANDSCAPE takes place in a single location. It can span a whole town, like in *The Bell Tolls for Kastor*; it can be a limited forest area, like in *Tomb of Dying Dreams*; but it can just as well be a solitary castle or a cluster of palisaded buildings, like Jakad's Heart in our example adventure (see below).

Besides being a suitable setting for the story that will unfold there, the location should also be given unique features in terms of structure and history – things that makes it a more interesting and memorable place. Perhaps it was the scene of a great battle, or the place where the battle was planned, and maybe there are still items around (authentic or counterfeit) to prove it? Perhaps legends say the landscape was an important outpost, market or meeting place hundreds of years ago, with remnants (real or otherwise) that give life and nourishment to the stories?

Although the location should almost be a character in itself, its features do not necessarily have to be linked to the theme/plot. Adventure landscapes work best when they are relatively simple in design, and if the plot is becoming too complicated, the Game Master should consider leaving the location's features and history as an atmospheric backdrop.

Finally: it might go without saying, but just to be on the safe side we will take the risk of stating the obvious – the designer should draw a map of the landscape; maybe even multiple ones, if the area is vast and contains elements such as ruins or buildings that need to be mapped in detail.

EXAMPLE: BLIGHT NIGHT

The adventure *Blight Night* takes place at the palisaded inn called Jakad's Heart, and consists of three buildings, a pond and a garden. The choice of location was based on a desire for the player characters to be drawn into the plot by accident, and then find it difficult to escape as the robber baron and her minions come to claim the Water of the Dusk.

What makes this setting unique is a legend directly related to the adventure's plot – the legend

Secondary Themes

Adventure designers seeking to add further depth to their creation may well incorporate a secondary theme into the plot. It could be jealousy, greed, oppression, or other forces that players can easily recognize and relate to. Or why not positive phenomena such as love, generosity, and justice, in contrast to the game's fateful main theme?

The secondary theme may connect to the primary one, like in the case of Gorak and Alahara in *Mark of the Beast*, or serve to spice up the adventure by making the place or some of the non-player characters more interesting.

The Inciting Incident: the event that stirs the conflict and agents into motion, forcing the PCs to act.

of the Black Cloak Jakad who was lured to the place by visions and inner voices, and on arriving found a natural spring of holy Water of the Dusk. The spring is still there, in the form of a stone-lined pond that has made the inn a famous pilgrimage site for the Sun God's followers.

Non-Player Characters

THE WAY WE see it, the adventure landscape's cast of non-player characters can be divided into three categories: lifegivers, potential allies and adversaries. But before creating any characters we would first suggest that the designer return to the four questions mentioned under Population in the chapter titled Building Game Worlds (page 10).

As for the categories, the adversary is usually the most important, followed by potential allies and, finally, lifegivers. In a world like Symbaroum, where the game designer rarely knows in advance which side the player characters will be on, one must often create two (if not more) mutually hostile groups who are presented to the players as potential allies or adversaries – which group becomes what is ultimately decided by the player characters' choices. But in their purest form, the categories can be defined as follows:

Adversaries are characters who in all likelihood will end up in conflict with the player characters. The most interesting adversaries have motives they themselves consider rational and that the players/player characters can understand, even if their methods are reprehensible. Like the location, they should be given specific features that make them memorable, particularly if the designer plans on having the same enemy appear in future adventures.

Potential allies are people or creatures who may be persuaded to help out if the player characters share their goals. The difference between a Potential Ally and a Lifegiver is that the former has some sort of ability, knowledge or resource of value to the player characters. Successfully persuading such individuals should make a difference; it might enable new approaches to a problem, or simply tilt the odds in the player characters' favor.

Lifegivers are characters who, simply put, give life to the setting, and who give the players a connection to the place in question; people to care about, who will

probably suffer unless the player characters handle the situation. Lifegivers can be described very briefly and normally require no stats or abilities.

EXAMPLE: BLIGHT NIGHT

Blight Night is a simple landscape with a clear conflict and an equally clear-cut antagonist in the form of the blight-stricken robber baron Nightblade – she is close to being thoroughly corrupted, and her desperate wish to avoid this fate is what drives her to violence. She is not a likable person, and her methods are bloody, but most players can probably sympathize (to some extent) with her goal – to avoid the cruel fate of blight birth.

The house-ogre Mangold is a potential ally, but mostly interested in protecting the innkeeper Koldra and her family, rather than participating in attacks on the enemy – unless the player characters put forward convincing arguments! Another potential ally is the rebellious goblin Shuggludd, who wants nothing more than to free his people from the drug addiction that is causing them to follow Nightblade.

Most of the other non-player characters are lifegivers. Innkeeper Koldra and her family are only mentioned in passing, and their sole function is as victims if the player characters should fail to repel the attack. The drunken minstrel Blackhawk is primarily a lifegiver as well, although he also serves to provide information about the legendary Water of the Dusk. Otherwise he is of little use to anyone.

That Little Extra

It does not hurt if the adventure landscape adds something extra. It could be a new artifact, ritual, rule, etcetera – something that makes the adventure more memorable, not least by being recalled every time the new item or rule is used. More traditional rewards such as gold coins or other valuables are also an option, but they rarely contribute much to the feeling of a living and engaging game world. In *Blight Night*, that little extra consists of three artifacts and as many new elixirs.

The Inciting Incident

NO MATTER THE landscape's design, and no matter how the player characters end up there, it can be a good idea to come up with a clear inciting incident that sets the plot in motion, introduces the conflict, and forces everyone involved to take action. In *Fever of the Hunt*, which is included in *Adventure Pack 2*, this incident is the murder of Handelo; in Lord of the Bog (from the Adventure Locations PDF) it is the awakening of Skaramagos. The inciting incident can occur shortly after the player characters' arrival to the landscape, or later on when the conflict has become clear and any alliances have already been formed.

Although the plot of an adventure landscape is largely shaped by the player characters' actions, the inciting incident is an event that cannot be avoided and inevitably forces a reaction. It is what brings the conflict to a head. When used correctly, it means the players and their characters are confronted with a situation with at least two options to choose from – taking sides in the conflict, getting involved or trying to stay out of it, attacking or focusing on defense, and so on.

EXAMPLE: BLIGHT NIGHT

An arrow hitting the shutters of the inn, followed by a hysterically ringing alarm bell, marks the beginning of *Blight Night*. The player characters find the palisade surrounded by frenzied goblins on the warpath. A bit further away, in the field south of the inn, a larger group of goblins are performing a rousing war dance; in the middle of them rises a single robed figure (Nightblade) who directs the goblins toward the inn with her black sword raised to the night sky.

The player characters are faced with a difficult choice: to stay and organize the resistance or try to run away. Either way, the event forces them to act.

Developments

COMING UP WITH and writing down possible developments is not strictly speaking necessary, but it is often wise to consider what might happen once the adventure landscape's conflict has been resolved. This is mostly about making educated guesses, based on the conflict's background and the parties involved. If the landscape is designed for a specific group of players/player characters, the designer's knowledge about these people should of course be taken into account as well.

Developments can pick up where the main conflict left off – the enemy could turn out to have employers or allies who do not want the player characters to get away, or who want to see their lackey's mission completed. Other options are to build on some potential ally who has other problems to deal with, or turns out to have been lying about his/her intentions.

EXAMPLE: BLIGHT NIGHT

Blight Night provides a couple of suggested developments centered around the goblin tribe Varraguldru whose members have been enslaved by Nightblade and her alchemist Ashfaru.

One of these developments involves a way for the player characters to fend off the goblins' attack – if they can be freed from their extensive drug addiction, Nightblade will lose her robber band and be easier to defeat.

Troupe Play

AN ALTERNATIVE TO traditional play where each player controls a single character is that the players take on multiple characters, often connected by a common place, organization or theme. This way of playing is known as "troupe play."

TROUPE PLAY ALLOWS you to play on multiple levels at the same time. For example, the schemes of princes (a set of influential player characters) can be alternated with direct actions (a physically capable but less socially distinguished group of player characters), perhaps rounded off with a group of young servants taking their first faltering steps into the world as adventurers. Every player inhabits one character from each of these groups, switching between roles as they go from palace intrigues in Yndaros to dirty work in Davokar or local adventures in their home village.

The advantage of troupe play is that it allows for a great deal of variation, in terms of both social standing and adventure locations, while still being thematically coherent. The variation lets the players experience many characters, places and adventures that are all connected by a larger story. The theme is also a strong reason for the player characters to be working together – regardless of position, they all have something to gain from the group's collective success, and much to lose from their failure. Because *Experience* is granted to all player characters that are part of the same troupe (see the text box Experience in Troupe Play), the fact that you may not get to play your favorite character in a certain scenario does not adversely affect his or her progression.

Troupe play is often played in a certain location (a principality, a witch circle, a temple, or one of Ordo Magica's chapter towers), but it is also possible to play a mobile unit – a company of sellswords, a merchant caravan, or why not members of a large expedition into the depths of Davokar? Troupe play can even let you play a whole clan or an entire nation and experience its eventual fate.

Getting Started with Troupe Play

THE FOUNDATION OF troupe play is a discussion within the gaming group; it is such a different form of gaming that it requires enthusiasm, or at least consent, from all participants. Since it is not a standard part of roleplaying games, the game form must also be explained so that everyone is on the same page.

For troupe play to work, each player must have characters in all groups, meaning that all players must buy into the idea of inhabiting multiple characters rather than just one. One way of presenting this is to view the game as a TV series: it involves lots of characters, organized into several groups, instead of a few people in a single group.

When everyone agrees that troupe play is appropriate, it is time to let the game begin.

FROM THE GROUND UP

If you decide to begin a game of troupe play, the players create multiple characters right from the start. An option is to first create one group and play a session with it, and then create another group. However, there are advantages to creating all groups before the first

Playing in Different Eras

An attractive version of troupe play (at least to us) is to play two or three gaming groups in the same location, but during different times in history. This becomes particularly exciting if set in a region where many dramatic and tumultuous events have taken place over the decades, or even centuries.

Experience in Troupe Play

During Troupe Play, *Experience* is granted to all player characters who are part of the troupe, whether they were used in play or not. The reason for this is mostly pragmatic: the question of which player characters participate in a certain adventure should not be clouded by discussions about who is close to obtaining a certain ability or similar.

gaming session begins. It will give the players a sense of scale. The drawback to this method is of course that it takes more time before the game can begin.

DEVELOPING ONGOING GAMES

Introducing troupe play into an ongoing game, is fully possible and often rewarding. The first generation of characters might be very successful and establish the place or organization in which the second (and third) generation's adventures will take place.

This organic way of developing the game is often appreciated by the players, since they themselves have built the most prominent characters and sometimes get to go back and play them. Once again it is important that everyone agrees on the game form, as it fundamentally changes the rhythm of the game.

Troupe Play in Practice

TROUPE PLAY IS based on the same fundamentals as regular roleplaying, but introduces a couple of additional elements. These are described below.

SUPERIORS AND SUBORDINATES

The most common form of troupe play is based on a clear hierarchy between the groups of player characters. One group has social or other kinds of power over a certain place or organization, and the other group/groups are subordinates of the first. Normally the groups consist of a) the leaders, b) a bunch of competent agents, and possibly c) a third group that is often very ordinary or down-to-earth, in contrast to the more competent and powerful groups above them.

There can be no serious conflicts between the groups; it does not work well in the context of troupe play. Grumbling about unsympathetic princes is a fun part of the game form, but outright revolts are not.

INFLUENCE BETWEEN THE GROUPS

Troupe play works best if one group's decisions and experiences affect the others. For example, the leaders' decisions become orders for a subordinate group to obey, and the latter's degree of success (or failure) becomes new information for the leaders to act on.

A third, less powerful group will suffer the consequences, and possibly discover something that can help solve the problem.

MEETINGS BETWEEN THE GROUPS

It is desirable that the groups meet, and one way of having this happen is to let a subordinate group encounter a member or two from a superior group in a meeting where all characters are played by their players. Such a scene might occur when some of the subordinate player characters report to one or two of their superiors – who are then controlled by their players during that scene.

JOINT ADVENTURING

It is certainly possible for characters from different groups to have adventures together, though one may have to deal with great disparities in social standing and *Experience* between them.

Many stories from books and movies are about such groups: an experienced mystic leading a bunch of less experienced individuals on amazing adventures. This becomes a bit difficult for gaming groups whose members have different ambitions concerning game balance, and some players may find it boring to play less influential characters. But if you talk it through and reach a consensus on how and why this is fun, it can really enrich your experience.

At the next gaming session it is recommended that you play another mixed group and let the players switch from powerful to subordinate or vice versa.

Table 2: Setups for Troupe Play

LOCATION	TROUPE 1	TROUPE 2	TROUPE 3
Border fortress	Officers and senior officials	Competent soldiers	New recruits or servants
Order chapter	Masters	Adepts et al.	Novices and servants
Sun temple	Temple leadership	Competent problem solvers	Members of the congregation
Barbarian village	The chieftain's council (incl. keepers)	Guard Warriors	Common villagers
Treasure hunters' camp	Founders/owners	Ambitious treasure hunters	Losers and beggars
Traveling jester group	Owners	Performers/problem solvers	Children or helpers
Goblin village	Chieftain with advisors	Prominent goblins	Common goblins

Adventures for Heroes

SYMBAROUM HAS AN open system of rules, with lots of possible rule combinations, and this is entirely deliberate. One core idea behind this system is to let the players explore and build their characters as they please – mastering the system is indeed part of the game's intended charm. A possible downside to this is of course that not all players are inclined to do that, and suddenly the Game Master might have a player or two who really want to max out their characters' combat abilities while others do not. There are three variants of problems that can arise from this.

ONE SUCH PROBLEM is that the gaming group's members are looking for very different gaming experiences; they disagree about the purpose of the game. The second is that the players want the same thing, but the act of mastering the system turns certain player characters into overwhelming combatants and others into spectators – in other words, there is an imbalance between the characters. A third potential problem is that the Game Master has trouble presenting the player characters with interesting challenges, meaning that there is an imbalance between the player characters and the adventure.

In this chapter we will try to address these potential problems, and offer suggestions on how to handle them.

Disagreement About the Purpose of the Game

A FAIRLY COMMON cause of friction and disagreements within gaming groups is unspoken expectations about why you are playing – at all, or why you are playing a particular game, since a gaming group might have several different games running at the same time.

Design Premise 2: Standard Distribution

The *Symbaroum* rule system works best if both player characters and non-player characters are created with attribute values according to the standard model. With the distribution 5, 7, 9, 10, 10, 11, 13, 15, each individual will have both strengths and weaknesses, which will come into play during combat, problem solving and/or social challenges.

Here are some ways to remedy such a (often unspoken) tug-of-war within a gaming group.

AGREEING ON THE PURPOSE

It is important to discuss why you are playing together, and what each participant wants to get from the game. Sure, there are ways to handle groups who have different ideas about this, but it will be much easier and more rewarding if a consensus is reached regarding the purpose of the activity. Even if that is not possible, the discussion will at least make these differences clear, and then it might be possible to alternate between servicing the different expectations by varying the focus of the adventures and gaming sessions.

HANDLING MULTIPLE PURPOSES

If the gaming group agrees on – or, in practice, has – multiple purposes for playing, the Game Master must try to reach a balance between them. The preferred playstyle of each player/character must take center stage with reasonable frequency, ideally every session; *"one scene per session for each player"* seems like a good rule of thumb. Players who want to learn more about the world, create elixirs, etcetera, are of course free to do so between gaming sessions.

Imbalanced Player Characters

SYMBAROUM'S RULES ARE designed as an open system, with the intention of creating a game where system mastering is not only possible, but encouraged. But problems may of course arise if all the players are not equally interested in learning how to exploit the rule system to create powerful characters. Below we describe a number of ways in which the Game Master can address the issue of imbalance between the player characters.

HIGHLIGHT OTHER CHALLENGES/ PLAYER CHARACTERS

One-sided gaming, where combat, problem solving or social scheming dominates at the expense of the other styles, becomes a problem in that some player characters are never given a chance to shine in a desirable way. Ideally, every gaming session should give all player characters their moment in the sun. The same applies if a player has mastered the system to such an extent that her player character turns everyone else into witnesses, while her own character sweeps through a certain type of challenge; usually combat, as that is where the *Symbaroum* rule system is deepest in its pursuit of tactically interesting challenges.

The Game Master's primary countermeasure against such overpowered player characters is to identify and analyze the character's greatest strength, and then let enemies behave in a way that makes that tactic less viable – or rebuild enemies if tactical changes will not do the trick. Do not be afraid to also change the terrain of adventure locations in a way that favors the other player characters – this is precisely the point: not spoiling things for players who have spent time and effort on understanding the system (which should be encouraged!), but helping other characters shine as well.

Many of the options available to Game Masters are mentioned and discussed below, under the headings Imbalance Between the Player Characters and the Adventure and Classic Heroes and Their Weaknesses.

HAVE SYSTEM MASTERS HELP THE OTHER PLAYERS

System masters can be of great help to the Game Master by helping other players, who are less familiar with the system, to hone their characters. That way the system master is recognized for her competence, while other players gain a better understanding of the system, which results in more potent player characters who work better as a group.

A brave Game Master can also leave it to system masters to design the enemies; this tends to be in the system masters' interest as they usually appreciate more challenging resistance! At the same time the Game Master learns more about how the system works, which is always welcome. In our experience, such alliances between players, and between players and Game Master, will elevate the game for everyone involved.

Imbalance Between Characters and Adventure

AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN the adventure and player characters can arise at any point in the player characters' career – since the players are free to build their characters any way they please, it is often difficult to create a balanced resistance for all gaming groups. On an abstract level, it can be said that tactical thinking is generally about using one's own strengths against the enemy's weaknesses; that is what tactical players will try to do, and the Game Master must respond in kind to maintain the balance.

ADAPT ENEMY TACTICS

The quickest way of countering overpowered player characters is to have their opponents act differently to what is written in their respective adventures or monster descriptions, which take no account of the player characters' abilities – the monsters are assumed to use their strengths against their opponents. But as Game Master you know your players' characters well and have a chance to exploit their weaknesses rather than employing the monsters' default tactics (which are based on their strengths). The most obvious method is to look at what the players normally do and let the monsters act in ways that makes such a strategy less effective – if the characters favor melee combat, their enemies will try to avoid it; if the characters send forth a heavily armored warrior, the enemy tries to go around or above that person to quickly advance deep into the group of lightly armored player characters.

Another approach to tactics is to consider combat an extension of the game Rock-Paper-Scissors. A typical gaming group is composed of at least one warrior (melee), one ranger (ranged weapons), one mystic (often attacks *Resolute* or deals damage from a distance), and a thief (crafty/elusive). The same often goes for enemy groups. A classic strategy is to have mystics attack warriors (who often have lower *Resolute*), rangers attack mystics (who have little armor); warriors target hostile mystics, but most likely end up facing the enemy's warriors in order to stop them from reaching the gaming group's more fragile members. Thieves usually fight alongside a warrior, in order to flank the enemy and gain *Advantage*. The latter is important in *Symbaroum* – focusing one's efforts on a single enemy and making use of *Advantage* is an effective strategy. Once the enemy's strongest melee fighter has been vanquished, the warrior and thief proceed to go after the enemy's mystics.

The main benefit of adjusting the resistance this way is that it does not take a lot of time for the Game Master; the monsters simply act in a way that is different to what their tactics suggest. The drawback is that it has relatively little effect; in *Symbaroum* monsters are usually focused on doing one thing well, with few backup plans.

For Game Masters who need something more effective, we will now move on to other, more potent and time consuming, possibilities.

ADJUST THE ENEMY'S NUMBERS OR COMPOSITION

In light of the reasoning about tactics, it is relatively easy to draw conclusions regarding the enemy's numbers and composition: a larger number of monsters is often more difficult to handle than a few stronger ones; a mix of many weak and a few strong enemies usually works best. If a gaming group is able to focus on a single enemy, it will usually be a very short fight. The *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 178 and onwards) provides guidelines for what might be a suitable group of enemies (in terms of numbers and resistance level) for a group of player characters with a certain amount of *Experience*, which can be helpful in this context.

Tactical considerations can also mean that it is better to adjust the composition of enemies rather than adding more of them; it is usually more difficult with more enemies who can attack the player characters' weaknesses rather than striking at their strengths. Replacing an enemy warrior with a mystic can be a great way of making things harder for player characters specializing in melee combat – suddenly a high *Resolute* becomes more important, as more enemies start to attack the player characters' minds.

PLAN THE TERRAIN

Another way of drastically changing the course of the battle is to alter the terrain in a way that makes the player characters' favorite tactics difficult to pull off. It is of course important that the player characters still have a chance to succeed, but they may have to adapt their tactics or let characters who normally keep their distance spearhead the attack instead. There are many ways of doing this, for example:

- Melee combat is made more difficult by chasms or traps, enemies attacking from the sky or from elevated positions.
- Ranged attacks and many mystical powers are made more difficult by pillars, side passages, or darkness/fog.
- Enemies attacking from several directions (including from above or from underground tunnels) make it difficult to maintain a classic battle line with warriors at the front and mystics safe in the back.

Design Premise 3: Offense is Favored

Symbaroum's abilities are designed so that offensive ones are always more powerful than the defensive ones – in other words, it is easier to increase the damage (or equivalent) inflicted than to become better at *Defense* or absorbing damage. The reason for this is that better *Defense*, more *Armor*, and higher *Toughness* all prolong combat scenes in an undesirable way, without having a corresponding effect on the outcome.

Table 3: Abilities and Countermoves

PLAYER CHARACTER'S ABILITY	GAME MASTER'S COUNTERMOVE
Bend Will	Multiple enemies; no particularly powerful warriors with low *Resolute*; provide enemy mystics with *Anathema*
Berserker/Robust	Enemies who strike hard once per turn, rather than making several weak attacks
Dominate	The enemy has a commander with a high *Resolute* and the ability *Leader* (master)
Backstab (master)	Enemies with high *Armor* (and/or *Berserker/Robust*) and the *Regeneration* trait, or possibly one of the abilities *Recovery* or *Quick Draw* (master, in order to quickly consume elixirs)
Marksman (master)	Replace traits like *Armored* with *Sturdy* to increase *Toughness*; give the enemy *Man-at-arms* (master)
Strangler	Enemies with the *Regeneration* trait, or one of the abilities *Recovery* or *Quick Draw* (master, in order to quickly consume elixirs)
Polearm Mastery (master)	Provide enemies with long weapons or *Natural Weapon* III
Two-handed Force (master)	Replace traits like *Armored* with *Sturdy* to increase *Toughness*; give the enemy *Man-at-arms* (master).

MODIFY THE ADVERSARIES' ABILITIES

A very effective countermove is to adjust the enemy's abilities, type and level. This obviously requires preparations from the Game Master, but it may be worth it: it will quickly make challenges more fun for players with powerful characters.

For this to work, the Game Master must do two things at the same time. The basic idea is to counter the player characters' strengths with other abilities and/or monstrous traits, while at the same time providing the monsters with weaknesses that the player characters can find and exploit – if they use other abilities or tactics than they normally do. In most cases it is quite clear what the monsters can do to counter the player characters' strengths – for example, if the characters are capable of inflicting heavy damage, you could increase the monsters' *Armor* or *Toughness*, or their ability to evade attacks. But sometimes it gets a little bit tricky...

Table 3: Abilities and Countermoves lists some of the trickier abilities and describes how to counter them. If you have questions about other abilities, or suggestions to share, you are welcome to raise the topic in any of our social forums.

When is Enough Enough?

A group of characters that includes several of the hero types described here will (as a group) have very few weaknesses. No matter what the Game Master throws at them in terms of resistance, tactics and terrain, such a gaming group will always be able to power through by sheer force – they have attained superhero status within the framework of the *Symbaroum* rule system. In this case, the only question that remains is whether the gaming group wants to continue playing, or whether it is time to start over with a new group and possibly another purpose for the game. There is no right or wrong, but nevertheless, the question needs to be discussed and answered.

Classic Heroes and Their Weaknesses

THE SYMBAROUM RULE system allows for the creation of many types of players characters. Some are more common than others as the system favors them, and because many gaming groups have a playstyle that suits those kinds of heroes. The Game Master should not punish players for creating powerful or otherwise heroic player characters, but instead present them with daunting challenges – sometimes by pitting them against tough opposition (monsters' strength vs heroes' strength); sometimes by having them face other challenges than they are made for (monsters' strength vs heroes' weakness).

This section describes a handful of the game's more common hero types, along with suitable counter-strategies for the Game Master. We will not say anything more about how to increase/strengthen the resistance; as described above, it is easily done by using more and stronger adversaries. Instead we will now provide some examples of challenging enemy types and enemy tactics.

THE GIANT BERSERKER WITH TWO-HANDED WEAPONS

Building blocks: The *Robust* trait and the abilities *Berserker, Exceptional Attribute (Strong), Iron Fist* and *Two-handed Force*.

Game Master's Countermoves:

- Ranged enemies.
- Enemies using abilities/mystical powers that target *Cunning* or *Resolute*.
- Enemies with *Man-at-arms* (master) which can counteract attacks that ignore *Armor*.
- Monsters with traits that bind or hinder movement, such as *Enthrall*, *Gravely Cold* or *Web*.

Typical Enemies:

- The armor-piercing marksman.
- The flying and will-bending mystic.
- The dancing backstabber alongside an enemy who can take a lot of damage.

The dancing backstabber, the mind-bending mystic and the giant berserker – a trio that is difficult to handle!

- Monsters such as Arach (exalted), Autumn Elf, Cryptwalker, Death Prince, Glint, Late-Summer Elf, Lindworm, Necromage and Nightmare.

THE ARMOR-PIERCING MARKSMAN

Building blocks: The abilities *Arrow Jab, Exceptional Attribute (Vigilant), Marksman* and *Sixth Sense*.

Game Master's Countermoves:
- Enemies who can quickly enter melee range.
- Enemies using abilities/mystical powers that target *Cunning* or *Resolute*.
- Enemies with *Man-at-arms* (master) which can counteract attacks that ignore *Armor*.

Typical Enemies:
- The dancing backstabber.
- The will-bending mystic with mystical protection.
- Monsters such as Death Prince, Dragon Fly, Gobble Gnome, Gwann, King Toad, Skullbiter, Spite, and Violing.

THE FLYING AND WILL-BENDING MYSTIC

Building blocks: The abilities *Bend Will, Exceptional Attribute (Resolute)* and *Levitate*.

Game Master's Countermoves:
- Ranged enemies.
- Flying enemies.
- Mystics with *Anathema* which cancels *Levitate*.

Typical Enemies:
- The armor-piercing marksman.
- Monsters such as Bestiaal (winged hunter), Dragon Fly, Ettermite Swarm, King Toad, Managaal, Marlit, Night Swarmers and Violing.

THE DANCING BACKSTABBER

Building blocks: The *Shapeshifter* (II) trait and the abilities *Acrobatics, Backstab, Exceptional Attribute (Discreet), Feint* and *Mystical Power (Unnoticeable)*

Game Master's Countermoves:
- Enemies wielding weapons with the quality Long
- Mystics with *Anathema* and/or *True Form*, which counteract *Shapeshifter* and/or *Unnoticeable*
- Enemies and Monsters with abilities/traits that bind or hinder movement, such as *Enthrall, Marksman* (adept) and *Web*.

Typical Enemies:
- The flying and will-bending mystic.
- The untouchable pile driver.
- Monsters such as Choking Undine, Darkling, Dragoul, Kanaran, Lindworm, Living Thorns, Marlit, Necromage and Sly River Hunter.

THE UNTOUCHABLE PILE DRIVER

Building blocks: The abilities *Exceptional Attribute (Accurate), Polearm Mastery (master), Staff Fighting*

Game Master's Countermoves:
- Enemies with long weapons/Natural Weapon III.
- Ranged enemies.
- Monsters with the traits *Tunneler* or *Leap* (see text box).

Typical Enemies:
- The giant berserker with two-handed weapons, with the ability *Two-handed Finesse**.
- The armor-piercing marksman.
- Monsters such as Arch Troll, Gobble Gnome, Guard Warrior, Gwann, Scorner, Ire Sylph, Ravenous Willow and World Serpent.

* See the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 136

Leap*, MONSTROUS TRAIT

The creature has strong, explosive leg muscles that allow it to jump several times the length of its own body, both vertically and horizontally.

I **Movement**. The creature can make a huge leap and land one movement action away from the starting point (about 10 meters). It suffers no free attacks from enemies it passes by or lands next to, but free attacks caused by the creature leaving melee combat are triggered as usual.

II **Movement**. Like I, but the jump is made with such precision that the creature can land on an enemy. The attack counts as a free attack with +5 damage, and the target is knocked prone unless it passes a *[Strong←Strong+5]* test.

III **Movement**. Like II, but the creature can jump up to two movement actions horizontally (about 20 meters), with such suddenness that it evades free attacks even when leaving melee combat.

* The *Leap* trait was introduced in *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*, and is copied here for those who are yet to acquire that book.

Under, Above and Beyond

IS THE REALM of Ambria and Davokar not enough? Do you want to offer your players something more spectacular than excursions to the Land of the Order, the First Realm or the western plains? If that is the case, it may be a good idea to have one or a number of gaming sessions take place in what in *Symbaroum* is called the Underworld, the Yonderworld and the Spirit World – planes of existence that lead to new experiences and perspectives, as well as other kinds of challenges.

THIS CHAPTER SHOULD not be seen as an exhaustive account of these game environments, but rather as a set of guidelines for creating different adventures, or rather campaign episodes. We recommend that Game Masters make visits to these worlds short, but eventful – partly to maintain their mystique and distinctive character, partly because we intend to delve more deeply into at least the Under- and Yonderworld in future modules. There is no need to worry about your portrayals of these places clashing with our visions, at least if you follow the guidelines below. All these worlds are vast enough to allow for great variation and considerable contrast, which is why it should not be a problem for your own ideas to co-exist with ours.

To further flesh out the three worlds, you will find event tables at the end of their respective sections. These can be used to generate random encounters and incidents characteristic of these settings, but can also serve as inspiration for the Game Master's own ideas.

The Underworld

THE UNDERWORLD IS a vast system of caves, chambers, tunnels and crevasses that extends beneath the roots, fields and cobblestones of the game world. It is a dark world in a double sense, a world that is

at most illuminated by fluorescent vegetation or rays of sunshine beaming through cracks from the surface, a world dominated by monstrous predators, where the corruption of the surface world trickles down to infect its inhabitants or form stagnant pools of sickly blackness.

But there are also good reasons for heading down into the dark. Some expeditions search for the sunken remains of ancient civilizations waiting to be explored and plundered, while others hope to find the troll realms supposedly located there, or even the legendary dwelling of the Iron Pact – the Halls of a Thousand Tears. Moreover, brave groups of people occasionally set off for the Underworld in search of unique monster trophies, missing people or expeditions, or in the hope of gathering rare medicinal herbs.

HISTORY

The Underworld is as old as the surface world, and its history is just as eventful. The difference is that it is more regional and clearly linked to events on the surface – mighty realms, clans or tribes will rarely allow the world beneath to develop unchecked, particularly if they feel threatened by something down there.

The Game Master can therefore assume that no person, creature or culture has ever claimed to rule or dominate more than limited parts of the Underworld, mainly in areas where the world above has been wild, without strong social formations.

Another assumption should be that dominance, with few exceptions, is a temporary state; Crypt Lords, goblin tribes or packs of predators who consider themselves rulers of a certain area can quickly and unpleasantly be driven away (or destroyed) by something bigger, stronger and more brutal than themselves – a group of World Serpents, a drifting blight mist, a rival conqueror, or maybe even a larger expedition from the surface world, composed of competent warriors and mystics.

NATURE

The Underworld is so huge and diverse that it has room for all kinds of cave structures – from labyrinthine tunnels and smaller systems of caves, to vast underground halls the size of Ambrian baronies. You should be equally bold when it comes to vegetation and water courses: forests of overgrown, luminous lichens and fields of (edible, poisonous, or corruption oozing) fungi can extend around underground lakes whose tributaries consist of immense waterfalls or fast-flowing streams.

Remains from past cultures or from the civilizations of the surface world can be found anywhere, in the form of anything from statues to great palaces, or even entire temple cities. One might also find caverns chiseled out by the tools of cultural beings – dwelling sites that show signs of past goblin settlements, or even places where exiled trolls have stayed hidden. Many of these are still inhabited, as are the ruins – by new rulers or predators who have claimed the place as their territory.

Virulent corruption is everywhere, in water, in rocks, and in treacherous vegetation – sometimes hidden, sometimes terrifyingly obvious in the form of mist, sparkling black flakes dancing in the air, or rust-colored rain from a cave roof far above. In contrast to the darkness, the fortunate can also find power nodes, often centered around crystalline structures of different colors, located in surprisingly healthy areas free of corruption – places much appreciated by predators and prey animals, but shunned by abominations and undead.

In short, you are free to design the Underworld as you see fit, with the restriction that the place described and visited by the player characters is fairly limited, possibly to the area surrounding a sinkhole or the winding path down from a ruin on the surface.

CULTURES

There are cultural beings living in the Underworld, but they are scattered and usually have more contact with settlements on the surface than with each other. Most of them are trolls, in realms ranging from ten or so individuals cowering under a single liege troll, to thousands of members – often gathered around an aged ruler close to entering its third hibernation. Like humans, the trolls are a heterogeneous group, but with a clear tendency to despise weakness in all its forms. The information presented in the *Advanced Player's Guide* (page 44) should be inspiration enough to design different underground troll realms.

Goblins prefer to live under the sky, but a few tribes live out their short lives in the Underworld, by tradition or out of necessity. In the former case they may be vassals of a larger troll realm or have managed to defend their right to a clean and lifegiving "oasis" in the subterranean dark. As for necessity, it is not uncommon for a tribe to fall out of favor with some force of the forest – another tribe, an arch troll, or a domineering Drakworm. Escape might then be the only alternative, which leads to the tribe members becoming fearful and unusually aggressive compared to other woodland goblins.

Ambrian expeditions never stay very long underground, but if the Game Master so desires, it is possible that Ordo Magica or some foolish noble might have financed a real outpost on the shore of some night black lake. It is also possible that undead and severely blight-marked humans have come together and found a home beneath the feet of their former brothers and sisters, where they can live without constantly being met with fear and hate, without having to watch out for witchhunters and hateful lynch mobs.

CREATURES

The *Symbaroum Monster Codex* introduces a number of creatures described as residents of the Underworld: Gwann, Spite, World Serpent, Chasm Stag and The Wily, to name a few. But of course there are also abominations and ghouls, as well as occasional packs of predators, reclusive King Toads and crestfallen arch trolls. Not to mention various forms of Corrupted Nature and Vengeful Terrain. As long as the Game Master can explain why a certain beast or monster horde has decided to abandon the surface, the player characters can encounter just about any monster in the depths of the Underworld.

There is also potential for fiddling with already existing creatures so that they offer different kinds of challenges. For starters, they could of course look differently – pale, emaciated, staring and eerily quiet. But they can also be given additional abilities and traits: they might carry the dark diseases of the Underworld (*Infectious*), exude corruption (*Harmful Aura*), develop the ability to act unhindered in the dark (*Night Perception*) or accumulate corruption and use it in combat (*Corruption Hoarder*). In short, the dark recesses of the Underworld and its unsound living conditions can spawn the most heinous creatures.

ADVENTURE SET-UP

An expedition sent by Ordo Magica, the Sun Church, or some similar faction has gone missing during an excursion to a ruin on the border between Bright and Wild Davokar. One of the porters, the goblin Iloul, is found roaming near the edge of the forest, exhausted and emaciated, rambling about *"the gap to the Great Blackness,"* about *"blind eyes watching all, deaf ears hearing all, voiceless throats groaning with hunger, toothless jaws grinding and grinding."* The satchel he carries is heavy with black rocks flecked with sparkling diamonds.

Perhaps it is the player characters who run into Iloul at the edge of the forest, or maybe they are contacted at a later stage by the expedition's initiator, who in turn has gotten hold of the goblin. Either way, they eventually reach the ruin and find it darkened – the vegetation covering it has shriveled and blackened, and the blight appears to be spreading through the surrounding forest, in all directions. Something must be done, quickly!

It turns out that the expedition, deliberately or otherwise, opened a crack in the ruin's catacombs and tracks suggest that the entire group has followed that crack into the Underworld. Exactly what awaits down there is for the Game Master to decide, but it should probably be possible to find the source of the blight. Perhaps it is a world wound or a simmering pool of pure corruption, something the player characters must close/cleanse with a sanctifying ritual, while being attacked by blight born expedition members and the creatures that have made a home near the blight source.

Table 4: Events in the Underworld

1D20	EVENT	VARIANTS/DESCRIPTIONS (1D6)
1–3	Carvings in the rock wall	1–2: The *Loremaster* ability or elf: directions to a troll forge, either active or long burnt-out and abandoned. 3–4: The *Loremaster* ability or goblin: warning of some nearby danger, still present or long gone. Use a threat from this list or create your own. 5–6: The *Loremaster* ability or troll: directions to a "song cliff," which could either be a name for an ancient assembly site for trolls, a magic node, or both. Whether it is still being used or has any power left is up to the Game Master.
4–6	*Vigilant* test; a hidden door leading to a deserted hideout.	1–2: Ambrian expedition: a week's worth of food for five people, 1D6 blankets, 1D4 lanterns and lamp oil, and 1D6 herbal cures. 3–4: Monster hunter: various trophies on drying racks, together worth 1D6×100 thaler. 5: Iron Pact: waybread for 1D10×10 days, 1D6 quivers with 20 arrows each, 1D4 fur bedrolls, 1D4 lanterns with lamp oil, and 1D4 doses of moderate antidote. 6: Goblins: food for 1D10+10 people in the form of dried insects, mushrooms and pieces of obscure meat. Leaves to sleep on for 1D10 goblins, 1D4 daggers, and a large jar of foul-tasting, but strong, liquor.

7–8	Mushroom patch (bracketed ability can be used to understand what the specific mushroom is and what it does).	1: Healing mushrooms, equivalent to 1D6 herbal cures (*Medicus*). 2: Poison mushrooms, 1D4 doses of moderate poison (*Medicus*, *Poisoner*). 3: Antidote mushrooms, 1D4 doses of moderate antidote (*Medicus*, *Poisoner*). 4: Hallucinogenic mushrooms, 1D4 doses, causes wild daydreams which are paralyzing unless the consumer passes a *Strong* test (*Poisoner*, *Witchcraft*). 5: Corrupting mushrooms, 1D4 doses, inflicts 1D4 temporary corruption (*Poisoner*, *Theurgy*). 6: Corruption cleansing mushrooms, 1D4 doses, removes 1D4 temporary corruption (*Medicus*, *Theurgy*)
9–10	Collapsed ruin. A sinkhole has lived up to its name and pulled a building down into the Underworld. The sky can be seen high above, and mighty trees lean alarmingly far over the hole.	1–2: Rune-carved monolith. The *Loremaster* ability: pre-Symbarian remains. A group who studies the runes carefully for 1D4 hours gains 1D4 *Experience* from their insights into the world prior to the rise of Symbaroum. 3–4: Monster temple. The *Loremaster* ability: Symbarian cult site. Those who study the temple carefully for 1D4 days gain 1D12 *Experience* and 1 permanent corruption for their insight into Symbaroum's dark history. They also find cult items worth 1D10×100 thaler. At some point during the search, one of the old "gods" slumbering underneath the temple wakes up; choose any strong monster – it does not have to belong in the Underworld. 5: Barbarian tower. The *Loremaster* ability or barbarian: the tower is a barbarian creation carved with protective witch symbols. Those who spend a day studying the tower and its protective symbols gain 1D4 *Experience*, and find arm rings and other barbarian ornaments worth 1D6×10 thaler. However, they also attract (PC+1) predators of weak or ordinary resistance. 6: Village of Ambrian freethinkers. Obvious to everyone: a number of log houses and a palisade have collapsed and been completely demolished. Those who spend 1D4 hours searching the rubble find 1D6 Ambrian settlers of different ages, all dead and carrying 1D10 ortegs each. A successful *Vigilant* test also reveals a hidden cache containing 1D10 thaler and a journal detailing the settlers' exploits in the depths of Davokar. Studying the books grants the gaming group 1D4 *Experience* through their understanding of the hard life in the woodland gloom. The journal is also worth 1D10 thaler to scholars in Ambria.
11–12	Outpost. An established and reasonably thriving colony down in the dark.	1: Base camp for an Ambrian expedition. 1D6 Ambrians and 1D10 helpers in a crude log house. Roll 1D4 to see who leads the expedition; 1 – Ordo Magica, 2 – Sun Church, 3 – Ambrian noble family, 4 – Treasure hunters 2: Initiation site for witches. 1D4 witches have gathered in this cave to initiate 1D6 future witches into the mysteries of witchcraft. 3: Goblin settlement. 1D10×5 goblins of various ages occupy this stalactite, which hangs like an inverted tower from the cave ceiling. A rope ladder is lowered whenever the goblins want to go up or down. 4: Troll dwelling. A sturdy door, guarded by a Gwann, leads to half a dozen cave chambers where 1D10+10 trolls live under the leadership of a liege troll. They are reserved, but not hostile, and willing to trade thaler for quality metalworks. 5: Refuge for the blight marked. A village made up of simple huts huddled in a cave chamber. It is inhabited by 1D6+10 blight marked humans and goblins, led by a severely stigmatized woman named Akulina. They are afraid of everyone, and terrified of being blight born. Villagers who come alarmingly close to that fate are burned in a nearby cave. 6: Undead. A small settlement with 1D4+2 undead humans (both Ambrians and barbarians). They are led by the undead theurg Tamas, who stubbornly clings to Prios' forgiveness, despite the fact that sunlight burns his puss-filled eyes so bad that he never goes outside during daytime. At night he brings his flock to the surface to pray and lament their bitter fate.
13–14	Monster encounter	1: Chasm Stag (*Monster Codex*, page 154) 2: Pale Crawler (*Monster Codex*, page 155) 3: The Wily (*Monster Codex*, page 157) 4: Spite (*Monster Codex*, page 102) 5: Gwann (*Monster Codex*, page 50) 6: World Serpent (*Monster Codex*, page 114)
15–16	Source of corruption	1–2: Pool of bubbling blackness sometimes shooting up like a pitch black geyser (roll 1D6 per turn, 1 = eruption). Whoever touches the blackness suffers 1D6 temporary corruption, as does anyone present in the cave when the geyser erupts unless they pass a *Quick* test. On success the individual only suffers one point of temporary corruption. 3–4: Black flakes whirling in the dark, often chaotically, sometimes almost like a coordinated dance. Anyone walking through the cave suffers 1D4 temporary corruption.

		5–6: Throbbing boils in the rock wall that crack open whenever something living passes by, splashing them with sticky corruption. Those walking through the cave must pass three *Discreet* tests or trigger one boil per failure. For each boil that cracks, the affected must pass a *[Quick +3]* test or suffer 1D4 temporary corruption.
17	Rune-covered gate. To open the gate one must first solve its riddle *[Cunning –3]*.	The gate leads to a Cryptlord's court, active or abandoned. If the Cryptlord is still around, so are 1D10 Dragouls resting in their alcoves. In that case there is also an artifact in here, as well as minor treasure worth 1D10×10 thaler. If the place is abandoned one can only find the treasure.
18	The tunnel of a World Serpent. It is 10 meters in diameter with a large risk of collapse.	1D20 is rolled every hour; if the result is less than or equal to the number of hours one has been following the tunnel, a collapse occurs. *Quick* tests are needed to avoid 1D12 damage (ignores *Armor*). Those who take damage must roll over the damage on 1D20 or get stuck in the rubble. It takes 1D4 hours to clear the rubble and free those who are stuck.
19	The remains of an Ambrian expedition, scattered over the cave floor.	1D10×10 thaler can be found on the bodies, as well as a handwritten letter describing how well the expedition is going. Someone with the *Beast Lore* ability can determine what kind of monster wiped out the expedition – choose from the Monster Encounter event or whatever else seems appropriate.
20	Crystal column, ice blue with streaks of purple light. *Loremaster* or *Mystical Tradition*: it is a smaller magic node not yet completely destroyed by corruption.	This node devours all temporary corruption generated in its vicinity, and grows increasingly dark as a result. Once it becomes utterly black (relevant ability and a successful *Cunning* test: the node can take another 100+1D20 corruption), the crystal cracks and everyone in the cave chamber gains 1D10 temporary corruption. As long as the node exists, beasts (both predators and prey) will be attracted to the area and abominations and undead are prevented from entering. Thoroughly corrupted creatures can enter, but take 1D4 damage per turn (ignores *Armor*), and these points affect the node as temporary corruption.

The Yonderworld

THE SO CALLED Yonderworld has already been glimpsed in previously published *Symbaroum* products – particularly in the *Advanced Player's Guide* (for example in the descriptions of the mystical power *Teleport* and the ritual *Summon Daemon*) and in the adventure *Yndaros – The Darkest Star*, whose climax takes place in one of its dusty deserts. Still, we have to admit that we are as uncertain about it as Ambria's intellectual elite, especially when it comes to the most contentious issue: whether it consists of a single world or multiple ones. And perhaps it is mostly an academic matter, as no one will likely stay in this (or these) world(s) long enough to map it all.

Venturing into the Yonderworld is to expose oneself to immense danger – anyone who knows anything about the subject agrees on that much. Going there blind, without some form of anchor or reference point on the other side, is even more reckless, or even suicidal. But in some cases the circumstances might leave the player characters without a choice, that the risk of the journey is outweighed by the potential reward, or that they expose themselves and/or others to even greater danger by not going.

HISTORY

Previously published supplements have already established that the Yonderworld is the cradle of humankind, from which they escaped in giant ships of stone powered by mystical ceremonies. The reason for this escape should quickly become clear to anyone visiting the world in question: it is dead, ravaged by the monsters which the witches call blight beasts and the Ambrians abominations or daemons.

This world was not destroyed overnight, nor because of any one event. It was worn down over time; the humans violated nature to fight the corruption they had already awoken, which only fed nature's wrathful reactions to the point where the corruption became overwhelming – you could say that the Yonderworld exceeded its corruption threshold. And at that point, the development became irreversible; the world was doomed and lost.

The history of the original human homeworld will be described further in future modules, not least in the final episodes of *the Throne of Thorns*. But this should not stop anyone from using the Yonderworld as an adventure location, if that seems desirable – it is an absolutely massive world (or possibly several worlds!), so even if your ideas should deviate from ours, it will almost certainly be possible to bridge such differences.

NATURE

Miles-long plains of sand and dust, in rolling dunes or accumulated into towering mountains, sometimes storm-swept, sometimes turned into mud by thunderous rain – as far as anyone can see, this is all that remains. The corruption is ever

Table 5: Corruption in the Yonderworld

1D20	CORRUPTION*
1–3	No corruption
4–6	1D4 temporary corruption per hour
7–9	1D6 temporary corruption per hour
10–12	1D8 temporary corruption per hour
13–15	1D12 temporary corruption per hour
16–17	1 permanent corruption per hour
18–19	1D4 permanent corruption per hour
20	1D4 permanent corruption per half-hour

* Note that suffered temporary corruption does not fade away until the victim arrives at a place without corrupting nature

present, in the dust stirred up by your footsteps and constantly radiating in the background. The Game Master can use Table 5: Corruption in the Yonderworld to get an idea of just how much corruption is present. It might also be worth consulting the table Events in the Yonderworld in *Yndaros – The Darkest Star* (see page 75) for additional inspiration.

However, for those with enough time to further explore the wasteland, or who know what to look for, there are interesting discoveries to be made. Hidden beneath the surface are the ruins of several great civilizations that rose and fell over the millennia. Some of these might even have been exposed by rain and wind, made visible to the naked eye and available for further investigation. But one must then have the courage and strength to defy the famished inhabitants of the Yonderworld, and possess some kind of antidote for the corruption, or it will quickly turn the find of a lifetime into a nightmare.

CULTURES

It would be misleading to say that any cultures exist in the Yonderworld. And as for the ruins which the player characters might be able to explore, the Game Master is free to design them any way he or she pleases.

Some may be tempted by the thought of making the Yonderworld very similar to our own Earth – that there are buildings of glass, metal and concrete (much like the ones in our cities) hidden underneath the sand and dust. That will not be the case in our version of the Yonderworld, so in this instance you should be prepared to later use the idea that there is more than one world beyond the Davokar region. The level of civilization we have in mind is more similar to Ambria, or rather the ancient Symbarian Empire.

CREATURES

There is nothing living in the Yonderworld, including its inhabitants. Sure, the daemon princes ruling the devastation are often powerful enough to rise above the pure, instinctual hunger of other abominations. Sometimes they even display something similar to rationality and cunning, but only those who were once human. Most creatures in the Yonderworld are just as furiously unreasonable as the primal blight beasts brought to life in humanity's new homeworld.

Speaking about the new world, the daemon princes, the "exalted" humans, would like nothing more than to go there. They try to trick cultists and sorcerers into letting them do just that, but are often themselves tricked or prevented from breaking free from the rituals' control. Humans who make it to the Yonderworld and somehow find a way back out will often do so with daemonic company (intentionally or otherwise). It is therefore not surprising that dimensional travelers quickly attract the interest of the deserts' rulers...

ADVENTURE SET-UP

A demonologist performs a teleportation, and on the way through the Yonderworld she glimpses a rectangular structure poking out of the otherwise rolling dunes of the desert. Shortly thereafter, she uses *Dimension Walk* to go back there. As she enters the ruin's antechamber she is overwhelmed by fear and anxiety causing her to turn back, but not before grabbing a strangely shaped metal object – one that she proudly displays to her colleagues upon her return.

A little later the demonologist contacts the player characters, directly or through an intermediary. The metal object has been stolen, probably by some envious rival. The problem is that the thief will be able to use the item to get to the ruin, and thereby become the first person to explore it – that must not happen!

The player characters are offered the job of escorting the quest giver to the ruin in the Yonderworld. The rival and her ruthless expedition is already on site, and will likely serve as a complication as the player characters explore the location. Perhaps the rival has already been kidnapped by a daemon prince; maybe one of her companions witnessed the abduction and reveals that the prince intends to force the poor human to bring him along on the journey back to Ambria.

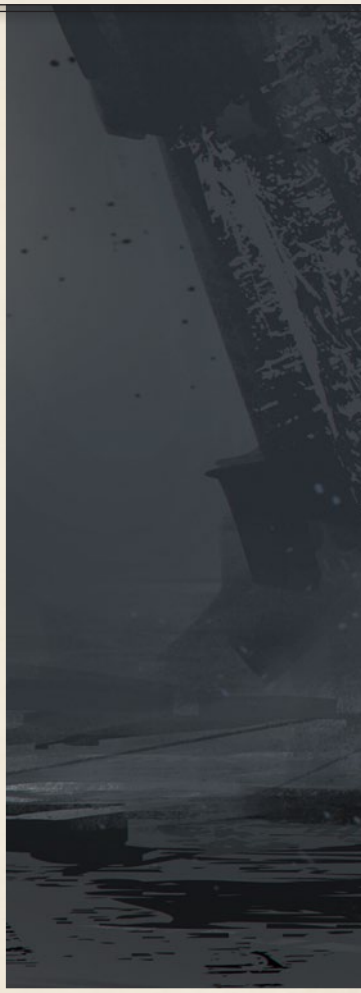


Table 6: Events in the Yonderworld

1D20	EVENT	VARIANTS/DESCRIPTION (1D6)
1–2	Dead node of cracked black crystal, with corruption oozing from the gaps.	The corrupted node no longer absorbs any temporary corruption, but mystics can choose to accept corruption from the node's smoking cadaver and gain one of the following advantages as a free action per turn. • +1 on one success test per accepted corruption (max +3 on a particular test). • +1 level on an effect die per accepted corruption (from 1D6 to 1D8, up to 1D12). • Recover 1D4 *Toughness* per accepted corruption (max 3D4 per turn).
3–4	Human corpses	1–2: Circle of worshippers, all but one with their throats cut. In front of the last person lies a dagger and an empty bowl of poison. The bodies are completely petrified, and mineralized tears shine like pearls on their cheeks. 1D10 of these tear pearls can be picked loose. They are worth 1D10×10 thaler each, and can be used to activate a mystical power, ritual or artifact power without gaining temporary corruption. Each use consumes one tear. 3–4: A line of humans who were first walking, then crawling, toward some distant refuge. This is as far as they got. Their bodies are mummified, resembling ancient wood. 5: A family huddled together in a shallow hole in the ground, incinerated in the middle of a final, everlasting embrace. Their bodies are ash, and the slightest touch will send them crumbling into dust. 6: Scattered bodies, trapped by death in various unnatural positions, covered by gently falling dust. Actually a group of PC+7 waiting Dragouls.
5–6	A find in the wasteland. Whoever passes a *Vigilant* test finds one of the following:	1–2: A memory cube containing an ancient man's memories from a happy or sad occasion, a baptism, a wedding or a funeral. Those who share the experience gain 1D4 *Experience*. 3–4: A blackened cranium still whispering prayers to long dead gods. Whoever listens to its prayers for 1D4 hours either gains 1D12 *Experience* or loses one point of permanent corruption. 5–6: An artifact from the section on artifacts (page 132)

7–8	The great throne of a daemon prince, alone in the desert	1–2: The throne stands alone in the desolate wasteland, its prince long gone. It is made from parts of a capsized stone ship. Those who study the throne for 1D4 hours gain the same amount of *Experience* from their new understanding of ancient human ingenuity. 3–4: The throne is empty, but surrounded by daemonic supplicants awaiting the prince's return. The throne is made of living bodies – pact-making humans who displeased their master. Those who talk to the supplicants and study the throne gain dark insights worth 1D12 *Experience*, and one point of permanent corruption. 5–6: A daemon prince holds court, surrounded by dancing daemons. Humans nailed on black monoliths provide the music. All who hear the lamentations of the tormented humans must pass a *Resolute* test or gain 1D6 temporary corruption. Player characters without permanent corruption are not affected. The daemon prince demands a pact with at least one of the player characters, or else he will unleash the daemons on them – see Pact-making in the *Advanced Player's Guide* (page 104). The throne is roughly made from the linked remains of human buildings; beams of rusty steel, a huge and highly patinated brass bell, a rose window of multi-colored glass. A gaming group who studies the throne gains deep insights into humanity's origin and early history, which grants 1D12 *Experience*.
9–10	Monster encounter	1: Black plague termites (*Monster Codex*, page 148) 2: Vengeful terrain (*Monster Codex*, page 110) 3: Blight Born Human (*Core Rulebook*, page 226) 4: Blight Worm (*Monster Codex*, page 145) 5: Glimmer (*Monster Codex*, page 42) 6: Primal Blight Beast (*Core Rulebook*, page 228)
11	Teleporting demonologist.	A demonologist is engaged in combat in the normal world when she vanishes, using the parallel landscape of the Yonderworld to traverse the battlefield unhindered, before returning to the fight at a strategically advantageous location. The demonologist has stats as a Necromage, if the player characters join the fray.
12	Blackened temple.	A once white and shiny temple dedicated to long since forgotten gods is now blackened and haunted by daemons. A gaming group who searches the temple for 1D4 hours gains 1D12 *Experience* from dark insights, as well as 1D4 temporary corruption. They also find an artifact. Furthermore, their search awakens a daemon or abomination of challenging resistance who attacks the player characters.
13	Shipwreck of stone.	A stone ship has run aground and capsized in the sea of dust. Everyone on board is either dead or blight born. A gaming group who searches the giant vessel gains insights worth 1D12 *Experience* and finds strange and valuable items worth 1D10×100 thaler. They are also attacked by two waves of thoroughly corrupted sailors, stats as Dragoul (PC+5 in each wave).
14	A sandstorm approaches. PCs must find shelter from the wave of corruption.	Finding a cavity that offers enough shelter takes a successful *Vigilant* test; the characters then take 1D4 temporary corruption as the storm blows by. Those trapped in the storm gain 1D8 temporary corruption and take 1D4 damage from the suffocating sand.
15	The ground has turned into treacherous mud	It takes a successful *Vigilant* test to notice this; the person who goes first and fails the test gets stuck in the mud. Pulling him/her up requires three successful *Strong* tests. If all three fail, the victim sinks into the mud and drowns. Powers or abilities that enable movement through the ground or underwater can save one's life, but the blighted mud still inflicts 1D4 temporary corruption.
16	Pointy rooftops of copper protrude from the ground	The player characters find themselves on the roof of a huge building, buried in deep and thick mud. Those who spend 1D4 hours digging finally reach the top floor and find an artifact. Frescoes provide clues about human history worth 1D12 *Experience*. Anyone digging this way inside the building gains 1D6 temporary corruption.
17	Doomsday clock of rusty iron	The mechanical clock has stopped at two minutes to midnight. A player character with the ability *Artifact Crafting* or *Blacksmith* can salvage the clockwork from the clock itself and make it tick again. It then works as a mechanical version of the artifact Xtala's hourglass (see page 150).
18	Interrupted aqueduct that no longer carries water, but thick, blighted mud.	With a successful *Vigilant* test, the player character finds a raft of glass up on the aqueduct, covered with dust. The character can use it to ride the river of mud at double walking speed, but the course is set by the aqueduct.
19	A beach of skulls and bones by a vast sea of fuming acid.	As the player characters approach the beach, something moves underneath the surface, creating ripples on the acid's otherwise mirror-like surface. The *Alchemy* ability: a melee weapon or projectile for a ranged weapon dipped in the lake will forever deal –2 damage, but gains the quality Acid Coated (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*). A person who disturbs the calm surface of the lake (e.g. dipping a weapon into it) is attacked by an abomination with stats as Hammer Eel (see the *Monster Codex*, page 150), but thoroughly corrupted).
20	A glass pyramid protrudes from the ground, its interior teeming with movement.	Further investigation reveals that the pyramid is full of blight born humans, fighting to break free from their glass prison. Seeing the player characters increases their frenzy, and a famished roar is heard ever so faintly through the thick glass.

The Spirit World

WHETHER OR NOT *Symbaroum's* Spirit World can be visited is for the Game Master to decide – it will not be used as a setting in any of the products currently on our drawing board. However, there is no doubt that the world in question really exists – evidence of this is seen in the mystical powers and rituals that allow people to communicate with the dead and call upon their help.

Those wishing to use the Spirit World as an adventure location would probably be well-advised to accept the sorcerer Katrandama's theories as reality (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 26). In that case, it is a barren land of windswept ashes that borders on Eternity, where the dead find the eternal rest of oblivion. It isn't necessary for you to decide if it is a world in the ordinary sense of the word, set on a celestial body which in turn is located somewhere in the universe. What matters is the border – it is a materially existing place which is possible to visit, but where those who more or less consciously cross over to the other side are lost forever.

HISTORY

The fact that cultural beings die does not mean that they are gone completely, except for their previous physical needs. The conflicts plaguing the world of the living can therefore be found in the Spirit World as well – in the wake of a great battle, the spirits of the fallen keep fighting in the afterlife, until they have made peace with the situation and passed on to Eternity; a murder victim whose killer perishes shortly after the bloody deed may well seek out the assailant's spirit in search of revenge.

Thus, the history of the Spirit World follows that of the living, but in the form of snapshots that take place during short periods of time while the dead still linger in the ashen expanse. It is a world where nothing lasts, where no realms or traditions survive more than a few Ambrian days. It might therefore be misleading to even speak of the world of the dead as having a history in its own right.

NATURE

Visitors to the Spirit World are met by gray-white plains of windswept ash under a constantly hazy sky. Perhaps the few dead who are still strong enough to materialize will be sweeping the ashes into piles, in a confused and vain attempt to build a home for themselves. But they never grow very big before they are leveled by the constant winds.

It should be said that the existence on the border of Eternity is completely free of corruption, since its power is linked to the world of the living and its nature. The spirits who arrive here are untainted as well, even if their living bodies were not.

CREATURES

Considering what has already been said about the Spirit World, it seems reasonable to skip the Culture subheading and go straight to its individual inhabitants.

The Spirit World is populated by disembodied entities, and its population turnover is quite rapid. The question is who they really are – what creatures in the world of the living have a soul? One might also ask whether they only come from the world where Ambria and Davokar are situated, or from other places as well.

This can only be decided by the Game Master, but given the overarching theme of Symbaroum, we would recommend a generous approach. That all deceased cultural beings pass through there goes without saying (possibly except for the dwarves; see the *Earth Bound* trait). But we would propose that beasts and undead also pass through the Spirit World on their way to Eternity, in the latter case when they are finally destroyed or banished from the world of the living. Perhaps insects, fish and even plants can be seen as tiny, flickering flares as they drift over the border to Eternity without pause? Abominations, however, have no place in the Spirit World – whatever soul they may or may not have consists of pure corruption, and is destroyed along with their physical forms.

A few words should be said about the select spirits who for various reasons remain in the material world east of Eternity. It may simply be that they do not wish to lose themselves, but more often they stay because of unfinished business from the time before their death. The former can turn into strange loners, hyper social types seeking contact with remarkable newcomers, or into aggressive ghosts regularly lashing out in wild attacks against the Spirit World's inhabitants and visitors (such as the player characters).

Spirits with unfinished business spend the afterlife trying to contact their homeworld. Most of them never succeed, some might at most move or nudge objects telepathically, but some do actually develop powers that allow them to communicate through dreams, visions or what a living person would perceive as an inner voice. Should living creatures come to visit, these can expect to be

Journeying to the Spirit World

Visits to the Spirit World should be extremely rare, with only a very limited number of individuals aware of how to perform such a ritual. Easy access to the ash-blown realm of the dead would demystify the afterlife; it would also raise troubling question about why mysterious deaths and murders are not routinely solved, since all it would take is traveling to the Spirit World and interviewing the victim! We therefore recommend that it takes very special circumstances to enable such an attempt – unique items, ceremonies that will only work under specific conditions, or creatures with certain properties. It should also require, as a form of anchor, a recently deceased individual (former PC or an NPC) with whom one of the travelers can relate. But as always, it is the Game Master's decision; all we can offer are tips and advice.

contacted, in the hope that they will carry out the spirit's final request and bring it peace – it could be everything from murdering someone to eliciting a declaration of love from a loved one who is still alive.

ADVENTURE SET-UP

A small town or large village is shaken by a long series of strange and seemingly unconnected incidents – a brutal murder, a theft, a fire, mixed with positive things such as a childless widow finding an abandoned, swaddled baby on her doorstep, and the insufferable son of an ailing widow suddenly disappearing. What has happened is that a group of young initiates at the local temple have learned to walk over to the Spirit World and decided that it is Prios' will that they bring peace to the community's dead.

The player characters could themselves have relatives or acquaintances in this place, or be summoned there as freethinking problem solvers. As they start digging into these cases, they soon discover that they are all linked to deaths that occurred in the last six months; perhaps there are other clues that they are connected, indications that also point to the Sun Temple.

By the time the player characters figure out who is behind these incidents, the initiates have already fled to the Spirit World, hoping to find a new place where they can resume their "sacred" quest. The player characters must pursue them, find them, and catch them before they complete the ritual that will take them to a new home in the world of the living – something that may prove difficult as they are likely defended by a bunch of grateful spirits.

Table 7: Events in the Spiritworld

1D10	EVENT
1	A lonesome soul walks sadly, but resolutely, toward the edge of Eternity. Whoever interrupts the wanderer must pass a *Resolute* test or start walking with him. Others must pass a *Persuasive* test for the player character to come to her senses and stop seeking eternal oblivion.
2	A group of souls, large and small, are walking together. The large ones wait for the little ones to catch up and take their hands before stepping into Eternity together. Whoever witnesses the harmonious event loses one point of permanent corruption.
3	A solitary soul is waiting for someone that never comes. It turns listlessly around and goes alone into the void. Whoever disturbs the wanderer must defend themselves against a Wraith.
4	A swarm of tiny flares drift toward the edge of Eternity. Perhaps they are the spirits of a flock of beasts or a cloud of insects? Those who take a moment to reflect on the event gain 1D4 *Experience*.
5	A spirit is searching around the border to the world of the living, looking for someone who did it harm. A person who knows the ritual *Necromancy* can now communicate with the spirit without using the ritual. The spirit tells the character who it is looking for, and asks for her help in seeking revenge. A person who helps the spirit – slaying the offender in the living world – either gains 1D12 *Experience* or loses one point of permanent corruption once the deed is done.
6	A dreamer in the world of the living has lost her way and stands, surprised and amazed, in the borderland between life and death. Then the vision flutters and dissipates as the dreamer wakes up. Anyone present who witnesses the dissipation can try to *Possess* the dreamer's body in the living world, as if using the ritual with the same name.
7	A spirit is shouting silently across the boundary between life and death; a hand reaches in from the side of the living, and for a brief moment the two lovers touch each other's fingers. Then the deceased is pulled back into the Spirit World, and the cycle begins anew. Anyone witnessing this may try to help the two lovers hold hands a little longer; it requires a successful *Resolute* test. On success the deceased relaxes, kissing its lover's hand. Before wandering off into Eternity, the spirit kisses the cheeks of everyone who helped. Those who helped either lose a Burden, gain 1D10 *Experience*, or lose one point of permanent corruption.
8	A spirit is obsessively building a structure of ashes, only to see it collapse again and again. A person who helps the spirit finish the structure must pass a *Quick* test. In that case, the spirit gives its creation a satisfied nod, bows to the player characters, and begins its walk to Eternity. The characters gain 1D4 *Experience*.
9	A spirit is digging in the ashes for some lost item. Player characters who decide to help out must pass a *Vigilant* test, in which case they find an artifact in the ashes. The deceased throws itself at the item, and anyone trying to stop the spirit must fight a Necromage. If the undead is defeated, the characters may keep the artifact.
10	Monster encounter (1D6) 1: Frostlight (*Core Rulebook*, page 230) 2: Lostling (*Monster Codex*, page 143) 3: Wraith (*Monster Codex*, page 148) 4: Necromage (*Core Rulebook*, page 232) 5: Nightmare (*Monster Codex*, page 78) 6: Cryptwalker (*Core Rulebook*, page 233)

Goal Oriented Roleplaying

THIS CHAPTER BUILDS on a section with the same heading in the book *Thistle Hold – Wrath of the Warden*, and includes parts of a chapter from the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*. We will revisit the previously published texts in order to gather everything in the same place, this time with the addition of two new goals: Conquest and Holy Mission.

WHAT THEY ALL have in common is a close connection to the game's central conflict, and the fact that they are written with Ambrians in mind as the active party. But the guidelines should be general enough to work well in other contexts as well – based on other lines of conflict and with other cultural beings as active parties in the drama.

The point of goal-oriented play is basically that the players are steering the narrative toward a common goal they have set for their characters. The player characters develop strategies and act, while the Game Master assumes an almost reactive role. Sure, some degree of planning and reflection is still required before the game begins, but the Game Master's main function is to turn the player characters' initiatives into exciting, varied and appropriate challenges on their way towards achieving the goal.

Each of the chapter's five sections begins with a brief introduction, which is followed by five phases which together provide tips and advice about what challenges need to be faced and what problems must be solved for the goal to be fulfilled. The number of phases can be increased or decreased, they can be played for a long or short time, and be more or less challenging – all depending on your, and your gaming group's, preferences.

Establishing an Outpost

IN THE SOUTHERN part of Davokar, called Odovakar by the clans, there are plenty of natural resources to harvest. Most obvious are of course different kinds of trees – some for construction works, others for making furniture and bows, still others for making cheap variants of blackbrew. Other resources can be valuable herbs, mushrooms and berries; caves close to the surface filled with lichen or bugs with

special properties; and ponds or streams whose waters have mystical qualities.

Anyone who gets wind of a sought-after resource and wants to establish an outpost nearby has a long walk ahead, but may eventually be richly rewarded in both thaler and fame. Simply put, the wannabe entrepreneur has five challenges to handle, every one of which may be turned into several gaming sessions. Also, nothing says that the phases align like knots on a string – on the contrary, they are likely to intermingle and challenges that you thought were dealt with will often reemerge, when you least expect it.

PHASE 1: THE CLAIM

All who wish to establish an outpost in Davokar must have the Queen's permission to do so. Practically this is done by buying an Explorer's License covering the number of people needed to run the outpost and all the amendments you will qualify for (see page 34 in the *Core Rulebook*). Now, this is the easy part.

A bigger problem stems from the fact that all interesting sites between the forest's edge and River Eanor are much coveted. If competing for a rich spot, you will have to convince the Queen's representative, for instance Suria Argona in Thistle Hold, that you are the best candidate, or try and find a way to persuade other stakeholders to revoke their bids. Trying to bribe the agents of the realm will likely get you nowhere. However, they are often in need of someone to perform services for them, which in turn can affect the decision-making.

Competitors can be threatened, bribed or possibly scared away. But the characters may also be required to find a partner (an influential nobleman, fortune hunter or merchant) who can provide them with support and thaler – naturally in exchange for a share in future earnings.

PHASE 2: CONSTRUCTION

Many outposts are built in or close to different kinds of ruins, simply because this shortens the construction time significantly. No matter if you choose to go that way or start building from the ground up, you first have to secure the area – drive local beasts away, identify and clear away dangerous plant life, cut down all trees near the headquarters and mark out the territory, for instance by coloring or scent-marking tree trunks along the circumference of the site.

When this has been done, building materials and provisions must be transported to the site. The journey itself may be a challenge, but even more so since robbers and barbarians are happy to raid caravans on the move. Additionally, the caravan guards you hired may decide that they would rather lay claim to your goods than work and wait for a miserly wage.

Then there is the construction itself. If you depart from Thistle Hold, the usual is to employ goblins from Karabbadokk or daythalers from Blackmoor – both groups having a tendency to make trouble if they consider themselves to be treated unfairly. A strike can be handled in various ways, with carrots or the stick. The former can lead to continued refusal to work, in the hope to raise the pay even more, while the latter can result in a bad reputation or even in the making of real enemies among the goblins and/or the people of Blackmoor. Oh, and as if that were not enough, the risk of being attacked by robbers, barbarians or elves is of course much greater until the palisade is in place.

PHASE 3: HARVESTING

A lot of things can happen to an outpost in the wilderness. Normally, the resource is spread out across a vast area, meaning that those who harvest it must leave the safety of the headquarters for most of the day – making them attractive prey for beasts and human antagonists. Additionally, there are forces in the woods that do not hesitate to attack a fortified outpost, be they elves, rage trolls or barbarian raiders.

There are also threats from other sources. Maybe you won the site in some kind of bidding contest, and maybe the loser decides to do all in its might to make you suffer. Or a newly interested party may hear about your "gold mine" and become intent on acquiring it for themselves – first by offering reasonable pay, but if that does not suffice by employing intrigues, lies and manipulation in order to get the Queen's Legation to revoke the license and pass it on to them instead.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the harvest itself is risky. Maybe it is revealed that the resource you are after is more or less contaminated by the powers of corruption? Or you can happen upon something, or someone, plagued by corruption instead. And even if it is not something related to the blight of Davokar, the outpost can be afflicted by other kinds of contaminants, which require you to seek medical aid. The wilds are treacherous and have a troubling tendency to transform the most beautiful pipe dream into the worst of nightmares.

PHASE 4: VENDING

No matter what the player characters are harvesting there are plenty of potential buyers in Ambria's towns and villages. That said, there are also competitors in the region, competitors who shun no means when it comes to winning over customers to their side.

You may come up against rivals who lower their prices to the extent that they sell at a loss. Others dilute the resource with similar substances and materials, and are thereby able to set their price much

lower. And then there are of course those who do not hesitate to use violent methods to sabotage others, for example by attacking warehouses and transports.

At other times, you may get involved in feuds between two or more customers who are prepared to do whatever it takes to acquire your product. It has actually been known to happen, that the peddler of an especially coveted ware has been accused of being an accomplice to everything from murder to public endangerment because an avid bidder took it upon herself to eliminate other potential rivals.

PHASE 5: GROWTH

Last but not least, if the characters have the ambition to see their enterprise grow – maybe to set up more outposts and strive to reach markets in other parts of the realm – all challenges described above will multiply and grow harder to handle. To compete with some other group of entrepreneurs is something entirely different from being the rival of businesses financed by counts, dukes or senior commanders in Queen Korinthia's army. With enemies like that you would likely do best sleeping with one eye open and always making sure to watch what happens behind your back.

If you are to keep your enterprise running for years and years, you must have hard hands and a thick skin; probably also access to protectors in the form of leading representatives of Ambria's power factions. If you are not prepared to take risks and work very hard, you should probably sell your business to the first bidder!

Conquest

IN DAVOKAR, AS well as on the plains in the west and in the surrounding mountains, there are still areas not yet claimed by Queen Korinthia. In many cases there are of course local rulers in the form of a clan chieftain or the leader of a settlement, but the wilder parts of the mountains and forests have territories exclusively inhabited by wild beasts, goblins, arachs, and other non-humans.

Ambitious player characters may want to claim a certain area for themselves, but most likely the conquest will take place on someone else's initiative. It could be the Queen who views the region as central to Ambria's continued expansion, or a noble or wealthy merchant prince who has decided to establish and build a realm of his/her own. Whether the player characters act on their own account or on behalf of someone else, they have a host of challenges ahead of them.

PHASE 1: GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

The first step for those seeking to conquer new territory is always to learn as much as possible about its current rulers – their character, resources, potential allies, and not least what fortifications are in place. Such information can be obtained in a number of ways.

Ambrian archives can be a good place to start, and clanfolk living in the area should also have important knowledge to offer – the more successful the player characters are in searching the archives and questioning people, the more plentiful and important the information will be. Perhaps the territory has previously been engaged in a conflict with some other ruler or faction, who in that case will have important knowledge to sell or offer in exchange for a favor or future trade deals? One must always be on guard, however, in case the informer has a reason to spread disinformation or go behind the characters' backs and sell information about their meeting to the enemy (who will then be alerted to what is going on).

It would of course be even more interesting if the player characters personally go to the location for reconnaissance. In that case, they will probably have to use false identities, disguises, and stealthy maneuvers (possibly combined with mystical rituals) to infiltrate the enemy's territory and centers of power – a fort, a fortified village, or a large camp in a secluded valley. The Game Master can prepare a number of important discoveries that can be made, which in turn affect the success of the characters' conquest. It may even be the case that highly skilled/fortunate player characters can obtain information that makes military means unnecessary, something that allows them to extort or otherwise force the enemy ruler to accept defeat?

PHASE 2: MUSTERING TROOPS

Not until one has taken full stock of the enemy's capabilities is it possible to determine the

Information and Degrees of Success

If the Game Master wishes, the characters can obtain more and/or more vital information depending on how well they succeed with their *Cunning*, *Vigilant* and *Persuasive* tests when gathering information – a higher difference yields better results. As for conquering new territories, a great success could mean that the characters learn about the enemy's special weakness or find out about a secret hideout to which the leader retreats in times of danger.

composition of the force necessary for the conquest to succeed – in terms of numbers and resistance level. See Table 20: Hiring Troops in the chapter Pitched Battles (page 73) for guidelines on recruiting sellswords and freelance warriors.

In the Davokar region there are plenty of commanders to turn to for people wishing to build an effective combat unit. If the conquest takes place on someone else's behalf, that person can probably provide a considerable chunk of the force, otherwise one must seek out barons, counts, clan chieftains, or owners of sellsword companies with troops to spare. Payment can be made in the form of thaler, writs of debt (see page 185 in the *Core Rulebook*) – or in the case of nobles and barbarian chieftains, a share in the spoils, a future trade agreement, or a military pact against a third party. Either way the negotiations will likely be tough, and if the player characters behave badly there is a risk that whoever they are talking to will offer his/her services to the enemy instead.

Oh yes, one must be very careful when building an army! Both commanders and individual soldiers might turn out to be spying for the enemy, or be willing to betray their superiors if they are mistreated and the price is right. Perhaps the player characters obtain information that identifies one or multiple suspicious recruits, which compels them to look into the matter and seek to prove the treacherous activities before the culprit can be brought in for questioning. Perhaps it eventually turns out that both the information and the "proof" were fabricated – something that might cause serious problems with morale if the victims of the conspiracy have already been punished...

PHASE 3: THE MARCH

Leading an army of hundreds or even thousands of soldiers, scouts and mystics through the wilderness is an adventure in itself. How things develop depends largely on where the desired territory is located, at least with regard to challenges related to nature and provisions. Guidelines and rule suggestions regarding how to keep an unruly army in check can be found under the heading The Player Characters as Commanders on page 71, including a list of Misfortunes that might occur on the journey.

Other challenges have to do with the army's members. No matter where the men come from, there can always be internal conflicts, based on past grievances, varying loyalties or events on the road.

Leading troops on the battlefield is not easy; leading them during a month-long march through the wilderness is no less of a challenge.

An inventory could show that some vital supply, such as medicine, or a personal item of great value has been stolen or sabotaged by someone who is probably an enemy agent. One can also imagine an outbreak of disease forcing the player characters to react promptly and decisively to stop the malady from spreading to the entire force. All such incidents could bring the march to a halt until the danger passes – which in turn causes other problems: supplies running out, the timing of the attack plan getting ruined, the stationary army becoming a tempting target for predators or enemy surprise attacks.

PHASE 4: THE BATTLE

When it comes to the battle itself, the Game Master is referred to the chapter in this book that covers precisely that (see page 67). But it is possible that the player characters will want to take on one or several specific tasks to handle during the course of the battle, out of necessity or according to previous plans.

Perhaps it falls on them to deal with the true leaders of the place/region, who are staying away from the fighting – in the safety of a fort, behind an iron ring of capable bodyguards, or hiding in a nearby ruin, cave or smaller fortification camouflaged by mystical means. Or perhaps the player characters decide to penetrate the enemy's stronghold and open the gates from inside, raze the wall/palisade or set fire to its buildings. Getting across, under or past the wall would only be the first of several challenges; it will be at least as difficult to carry out the mission itself, while remaining undetected until allied troops are ready to advance.

Other reasons to go behind enemy lines, or even into their fortified stronghold, could be to free a prisoner, or kidnap or steal some means of leverage. The former case might concern an allied spy or warrior whose freedom will have a positive effect on the player characters' plans, because of the insights she possesses or because she raises the army's morale to new heights.

It could also be a relative of a potential ally refusing to take up arms until the kidnapped individual has been freed. And speaking of kidnappings, perhaps the abduction of the enemy leader's child, husband or elderly mother would be leverage enough to prevent bloodshed, so the conquest can take place around the negotiating table instead?

It does not even have to be a person at all – an item of great importance for the area's most senior commander might be enough: an artifact, a family heirloom or some form of legal document.

PHASE 5: ESTABLISHING DOMINANCE

Conquering an area has often been described as easier than establishing dominion over its lands and particularly its population. The first step is to clean up after the battle – tending to the wounded (on both sides?), rebuilding fortifications and infrastructure, and mustering (and, if necessary, reinforcing) one's army.

But the trickiest part is always what comes next: winning over the locals. Even if the previous ruler was a vicious tyrant, there will probably be some who are opposed or hostile to the new power – expecting it to be as despotic as the old one, or seeing a chance to take control of the region themselves. Local leaders of different factions must be handled, with either stick or carrot, and the general public must be persuaded that a brighter future lies ahead after the battle that probably claimed the lives of many of their sons and daughters.

At this point there is an endless source of challenges for the player characters to face. Perhaps some key figure from the overthrown government managed to escape and immediately tries to organize a resistance from her hideout? Perhaps parts of the population rebel in some peripheral part of the conquered region? Perhaps some discharged members of the player characters' former army feel unfairly treated and remain in the area as brigands? The chapter titled Managing a Domain, beginning on page 76, can provide the Game Master with inspiration when it comes to the challenges of establishing and maintaining dominance over a specific territory.

Holy Mission

THERE ARE LOTS of humans and other cultural beings who have not yet come to know the love and laws of Prios. We are primarily referring to the barbarian clans, particularly the marginalized groups who for various reasons do not feel (or are not considered) part of the community. Other examples include the goblin settlements of Ambria and Davokar, the troll realms of the Underworld, and the mountain passes where the Bestiaals are growing in strength and number. There have even been attempts to convert members of the Iron Pact, though most Prios worshippers consider such efforts pointless and bordering on heretical.

Perhaps the player characters are a group of missionaries bent on spreading the Lawgiver's

blessing to those still stumbling in spiritual darkness. Alternatively, they could be hired as bodyguards to escort a group of sun priests from Thistle Hold, Kastor or some other border town. In that case they will find the challenge of educating and converting the heathens just as difficult as the journey to their godforsaken corner of the world.

PHASE 1: THE SUN MARCH

The term Sun March has historically referred to actual heretic persecutions, often carried out by the Templars and resulting in the total destruction of "dark" settlements, outposts or villages. But more recently the word has also come to describe peaceful missionary tours to remote villages in the wilderness of the Davokar region, primarily in the mountains or forests. Besides the hardships that can befall those traveling through such areas (see page 89–99), a group of missionaries might encounter more specific types of challenges.

Table 8 describes a number of events or situations that may arise during the sacred Sun March. How often you roll on (or pick events from) the table is up to the gaming group to decide, but once every three to five days of travel can be a good benchmark – the shorter the trip, the more frequent the intervals.

Table 8: Events During Sun Marches

1D20	EVENT	DESCRIPTION	EFFECT
1–3	Cursed	A missionary claims a deer gave him the evil eye, causing concern among the whole expedition.	All participants make a *Resolute* test; those who fail suffer –1 to all success tests for 24 hours.
4–5	Punished	A missionary claims to have dreamed that another member's thoughts have displeased Prios, overwhelming everyone with shame and guilt.	All participants make a *Resolute* test; those who fail suffer –2 to all success tests for 24 hours.
6	Infected	A missionary gets an impulse to pick berries from an unknown bush and offer them around – likely not from Prios, but from some false god.	Everyone is exposed to a Weak disease (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 169).
7	Unlucky	It is as if the sun no longer shines on the group; nothing seems to be going right.	During the next scene, an odd result on a success test means failure, except if the result is 1.
8	Prios' Judgment	The expedition leader sees the fingers of Prios (sunrays) pointing at a body of water and encourages everyone to drink from it.	Everyone is exposed to a Strong disease (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 169).
9–11	Nothing happens		
12–14	Blessed	A missionary hears Prios' voice whispering words of love in the wind rustling through the trees.	All participants make a *Resolute* test; a success adds +1 to all success tests for 24 hours.
15–16	Sanctified	An expedition member wakes up with a never-before-heard hymn to Prios stuck in her head.	Singing the hymn grants everyone +2 to all success tests for 24 hours.
17	Sun Temple	The expedition comes across an ancient, overgrown ruin; there is a sun symbol carved above the entrance.	It takes a full day to explore the ruin (see Ruin, page 98), which turns out to be a nest of hungry spiders (of suitable resistance).
18	The wellspring of the One	The group passes a wellspring where a few points of light glitter despite it being in the shade.	1D8 drops of natural Water of the Dusk are drifting around in the spring; collecting them requires one successful *Vigilant* test per drop; failure causes the drop to burst and mix with the water.
19	Revelation	A dazzling golden-white figure descends through the foliage and touches all missionaries (but no companions) on the forehead with a finger.	Those it touches may choose one of the following: Gain 10 *Experience*; Lose 1D4 permanent corruption; Lose one Burden (see text box); Gain +1 to all success tests or effect tests for one month; Gain a sacred protection that lasts for one month and allows the person to ignore 1 damage from all attacks, or 2 damage from the natural weapon of abominations or undead.
20	Divine Gift	The group stumbles upon the decayed remains of an arach; all equipment has long been destroyed, save for a single object.	Prios has left a gift for the missionaries, in the form of an artifact (the Game Master chooses one from page 132–150).

PHASE 2: ARRIVAL

Whether the missionaries' destination is a human settlement or a community of goblins, trolls, or something else, it is often difficult to know in advance how their arrival will play out – the reception could be anything from peaceful or hesitant to downright hostile.

Being warmly welcomed to a wilderness community is certainly nice, and its people may actually be open and favorably disposed toward strangers. But experienced missionaries know not to let their guard down! All of a sudden the locals turn out to be man-eaters just waiting for the main course to fall asleep in their assigned hut. They might also be in need of new slaves, or sacrifices to their imaginary (or very real) god. No matter the nature of the reception, the first day will greatly affect the mission's outcome: if the player characters manage to fend off an attack, or behave in a way that earns the heathens' respect or sparks their curiosity, they will most likely get a chance to explain why they have come and what they have to offer, in the form of truth and salvation and possibly a worldly gift or two.

If the settlement they visit is already under the control of some other power in the area, the missionaries' arrival will be very different. The power in question could be a neighboring community, a powerful beast, or a long dead ruler who has risen from the grave and resumed his former position. Such situations could cause problems, like the player characters being welcomed at first, only to later be imprisoned and brought before the local leader. But they also present opportunities. If the missionaries figure out what is going on and manage to defeat or expel the tyrant, they will probably have an easier time convincing the sinners of Prios' greatness!

PHASE 3: SALVATION

Converting heretics is usually a test of patience; it can take weeks or months for the sermons to bear fruit. It is always easiest if the target has never heard of Prios before and their lifestyle is such that they are impressed by the missionaries' appearance, equipment and problem-solving skills – that is, if the player characters with a few quick suggestions (*"inspired by the Sun God"*) can make the inhabitants safer and better fed. The most difficult scenarios would probably be to convert Ambrians who have deliberately turned their backs on Prios, and obviously members of the Iron Pact who believe the Sun God's laws call for the pillaging of Creation.

The optional rule Group Indoctrination (see textbox) can be used to determine how the work proceeds. An impressionable group starts out as Welcoming (–5), while an isolated settlement of pagan worshippers begins at Hateful (–50). A new roll is made for every week the missionary effort progresses, but there is also reason to roleplay a number of scenes where the player characters are tested, or where they themselves take the initiative to influence the settlement.

Staging a miracle is a tried and tested way of setting unbelievers on the right path – something that is best achieved through the use of mystical abilities such as *Lay on Hands*, *Prios' Burning Glass*, or *Sanctifying Rite*; one can also resort to illusions or downright trickery. Another successful method can be to attack an "overwhelming" threat in the area and use one's victory as proof of Prios' greatness.

Naturally, there are more brutal methods as well. If the settlement already has a shaman or some other spiritual leader, perhaps a duel between the champions of the respective gods can be a route to success – preferably a fight to the death so the problem gets a permanent solution. There have also been occasions when missionaries have staged "accidents" that killed the most ardent skeptics, to show that Prios always punishes heretics. Last but not least are the methods employed by the Whip of Prios, meant to expose ungodly individuals who displease the Lawgiver. The most famous of these methods is the so called Trial of the Sun – it is not for the faint of heart, but worth knowing about if the heretic crowd is difficult to convince!

Revelation & Burdens

We suggest that the revelation can free a player character from the following burdens: *Addiction*, *Bloodthirst*, *Epileptic*, *Impulsive*, *Nightmares* and *Sickly*. Others could be appropriate as well, if the players and Game Master are in agreement

The Trial of the Sun

The Trial of the Sun is a ritual that can be performed, willingly or otherwise, by an accused heretic wishing to prove her innocence. The heretic undresses his upper body and washes himself with water blessed by a sun priest, before being shackled in a place bathed in sunlight. If the person really is a heretic, the skin starts to redden and sting after about ten minutes; within an hour there will be blisters on the heretic's head, torso and arms; in the following hour the symptoms are exacerbated and the pain gets worse and worse. If left in the sunlight, the heretic will lose consciousness after 1D4+2 hours and spontaneously ignite after yet another hour.

It should be duly noted, that this method requires the water to be blessed in a particular way, with a combination of Prios' word and a few drops of extract from the Graymilk Root. And the sun priest must of course be sure that the person on trial is in fact a heretic, as the symptoms can affect even the most pious of Sun God worshippers...

Group Indoctrination

Converting a group of cultural beings to the church of the One is a lengthy process that requires patience and persistence, especially if the target group is initially averse to the idea. Table 9: Initial Attitude provides suggestions on possible starting values, and only once the Salvation Value reaches 0 has a critical group been saved in the name of Prios.

The missionary work itself is conducted through a combination of manipul... sorry, conversations about Prios' greatness and bold action. Table 10: Miracles and Wonders offers suggestions on the latter, including how many salvation points such efforts can yield. We propose that a respective effort only give points the first time it is performed; furthermore, performing wonders can only give points once per week – if miracles happen too frequently, they may seem less impressive to the target group.

As for the daily conversations and sermons, the missionaries can make one *Persuasive* test per week, with the modifier indicated in the Resistance column in Table 9: Initial Attitude. A successful test increases the salvation value by 1; if it succeeds with a difference of five or more, the value increases by 2. On failure nothing happens, but if it fails with a difference of five or more, the value decreases by 2.

Note that these principles can be applied in other contexts as well, when convincing a group of people to accept a new ruler, ideology or deity.

Table 9: Initial Attitude

ATTITUDE	SALVATION VALUE	RESISTANCE
Welcoming	–5	–
Neutral	–10	–1
Apprehensive	–15	–1
Disapproving	–20	–3
Distrustful	–30	–3
Hateful	–50	–5

PHASE 4: THE TEMPLE

When the entire, or at least a critical mass of, the population (including its worldly leader/s) has professed their faith in the Lawgiver, it is time to start building the settlement's sun temple. The size and building material may vary, depending on the size of the congregation and the natural environment in the area; ideally the dome should of course be made of copper, but yellow-painted stone or wood will also suffice. The most important things are the sun podium and the windows or openings that allow the evening sun to shine down on the preaching liturgy.

As a rule there is always at least one faction among the locals that wishes to stop the construction, because they disapprove of the "outsider's" influence, because the new order strengthens the current chief's/leader's position, or perhaps because they refuse to abandon their heretical ways. The resistance could take place openly, in the form of protests and occupation of the construction site, but it is not uncommon for the heretic minority to act in secrecy – trying to sabotage the construction effort or even eliminate the new god's prophets: the player characters.

Other challenges will result from the accidents (real or orchestrated) that inevitably occur during major construction projects. Heretics in the area will probably point to these incidents as proof that the temple is an abomination in the eyes of the old gods; the player characters must get their loyal followers to see them instead as wicked powers struggling against the supremacy of Prios, and then show them that the Sun God cares for the families of the killed or wounded.

Finally, the construction might also attract external threats. The constant hammering and clattering can attract flocks of predators or agitate larger beasts roaming the region. But the worst case scenario would probably be if the Iron Pact realizes what is going on – the elves do not want the Queen's

Table 10: Miracles and Wonders

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	SALVATION POINTS
Healing	Using *Inherit Wound* or *Lay on Hands*	1
Unmasking	Using *True Form* to see through illusions	1
Foretelling	Using *Oracle* to make a prediction that comes true	1
Blessing	Using *Sanctifying Rite* to heal Corrupted Nature	1–2
Banishing	Using *Exorcism* to banish a spirit from a possessed individual	1–2
Duel	Defeating a Challenging or Strong champion of the opposing faction	1–2
Heroic Deed	Defeating a Strong, Mighty or Legendary monster	1–3
Liberating	Destroying or driving away an external power plaguing the target group	2–3

people to increase their influence in the forests and mountains. If the player characters are lucky, the first threats will come from a diplomatic faction. But no matter the makeup of the warband, it will definitely end in bloodshed unless the construction stops and the missionaries leave the area at once – possibly the most common cause of death among Ambrian missionaries, at least in Davokar. Here the groundwork is put to the test; will the converts take up arms against the Iron Pact or abandon the player characters in their hour of peril?

PHASE 5: MAINTAINING THE CONGREGATION

When the temple is finished and all internal and external threats have been addressed, it is time to start thinking about the journey home. But no matter how convinced the missionaries are that Prios has taken the settlement under his heavenly wings, it is important to prepare the population for a life without the Lawgiver's prophets. "Prios" must appoint a worthy high priest and a group of associates who can carry the Sun God's banner through years, decades, even centuries. In the future these select few must also be presented with privileges and gifts – to prevent them from being seduced by dark forces, but also to make them seem favored and respectable in the eyes of the populace.

No matter how well they succeed in appointing their successors, the player characters must keep an eye on what happens in the area. They should provide the high priest with a bunch of homing pigeons, a mind stone (see *Thistle Hold – Wrath of the Warden*, page 111), or some similar means of conveying news and periodic reports. Perhaps situations will arise that force the player characters to revisit the settlement. For instance, they could hear about wavering faith and growing doubt among the populace, or about missionaries from a nearby heretic nest having come to spread their erroneous beliefs. Reports of a fire at the temple, or about a priest (or several) dying under mysterious circumstances, would make matters even more urgent. The most worrying scenario would of course be if all communication with the settlement suddenly went silent...

Monster Hunt

THE WILDERNESS MUST be tamed, if not outright beaten into submission. One way of demonstrating the superiority and dominance of the Ambrian people is through monster trophies – proof that not even the mightiest King Toad, Drakworm or World Serpent is safe in the world of humans! Suitable game is everywhere, in the forests, mountains and waters. Such creatures are sometimes difficult to find, and often even harder to kill, but those who manage to drag home a magnificent specimen can often expect great amounts of glory, wealth and fame.

Perhaps the player characters are members of a monster hunting society, as described in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* – a book which also presents three different types of monster hunting (page 183)? They could also be offering their services to some rich individual seeking a majestic trophy for the wall, or to the residents of an outpost or border town who want to get rid of the fiendish creature terrorizing their lives. Whatever their motivation may be, the monsters of the wild will present the characters with great challenges.

PHASE 1: THE PREY

How the player characters decide which prey to pursue can vary considerably. Perhaps they themselves have strong opinions on the matter? Perhaps they receive a specific request from some quest giver? In towns like Kastor and Thistle Hold they may also seek out or run into various hunters, explorers and others who like to tell wild stories about their past exploits. This can be a valuable source of knowledge even if the prey has already been decided on – why chase after some half-wounded young Manauit if someone can point the way to a fully grown, magnificent King Toad; why target a Scorner "living" in some corruption-oozing blackland when another is said to be haunting an easily accessible burial mound?

Also, one cannot rule out the possibility that the player characters' monster hunt is just a brief guest appearance, prompted by the pleas of some vulnerable village or accepted as a paying assignment from someone who wants a specific beast dead – to avenge a loved one it devoured or to decorate the throne room with the trophy of a famous beast.

PHASE 2: THE TOOLS

Before the hunt begins it is important to study the targeted prey. Perhaps there are people who have actually encountered the monster in question; perhaps there are written sources to consult, or legends to be heard? Whatever the characters decide to do, they must try to learn as much as possible about the strengths and weaknesses of the individual beast and the species as a whole. But such insights rarely come for free, and there might

When hunting monsters, understanding one's prey and getting the right sort of equipment is pivotal. Or else...

be others who seek the same exact information – which can lead to everything from bidding wars to violent confrontations.

The knowledge gathered will prove useful when it is time to purchase equipment for the journey. Perhaps the assumed weaknesses of the prey make it particularly vulnerable to mechanical traps, a certain type of poison or weapons with the quality Long? Perhaps the characters' insights indicate that they should favor a certain means of protection, or buy a large number of hunting dogs to distract the monster while the hunters try to kill it? Having the right tools can be just as important for monster hunters as for craftsmen and artists.

Finally, the characters must prepare for the journey itself. They must acquire an Explorer's License, the right equipment, and possibly a guide who is familiar with their destination. There will no doubt be maps for them to buy, from people claiming that their particular route is the fastest and safest way to the beast's habitat. But whom should they trust, and how much are they prepared to pay? It is always safest to compensate others in the form of future shares (see page 185 in the *Core Rulebook*), but on the other hand, that means someone else will claim a large piece of the profit – often as much as 30–50%.

PHASE 3: THE HUNT

Journeys through Davokar are always dangerous and eventful. First the player characters must make their way to the area where the prey is

supposed to be, and that alone can be challenging. Elven warbands, ardent rangers and packs of prowling predators are always a threat. Or perhaps the player characters are in a race with one or multiple rival hunting parties, who seek to sabotage any competitors by attacking them in their camp, destroying their supplies or running ahead to set nasty traps.

Once they have arrived, the real work begins. Some prey can be found in a specific location, such as a ruin, a cairn, a sinkhole or a cave. In that case the place must be reconnoitered, the entrances located, and potential dangers identified – tasks which become particularly interesting if other hunting parties have also arrived in the area.

Other prey are constantly on the move and must either be tracked or lured into a trap. The risk of such a hunt is that the prey may have already left for some other pasture or hunting ground, which poses challenges the player characters may not be prepared for. Another risk is that the prey might realize it is being hunted, and set a trap or lay an ambush for the player characters...

PHASE 4: THE DEATHBLOW

When engaged in a monster hunt, the hunters' confrontation with their prey should of course be a climax, particularly if this is something the gaming group occupies themselves with for several sessions in a row. Try to create some variation between the adventures, in terms of setting and enemy strategies. Regarding the former, the great ruins of Davokar may seem like the obvious choice, but even that can become tiresome unless varied with overgrown valleys, open glades, wet marshes or underground vaults. As for strategies, the traits presented in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 164–173) can be combined in lots of ways, which (mixed with the chosen battlefield) will force the player characters to use the full range of their capabilities in order to succeed in their hunt.

Also, it would not hurt if each confrontation offers at least one unpleasant surprise. If the player characters are well-prepared and have carefully surveyed the area, the Game Master should of course reward them by not changing the circumstances completely. But the forest of Davokar is capricious, and its inhabitants unpredictable! Perhaps the prey has abilities they do not know about? Perhaps there are other threats nearby; threats that do not reveal themselves until the player characters attack? Even the weakest prey can be difficult to kill if it turns out to be protected by a so far invisible spirit, or if a blight mist suddenly comes drifting in on imperceptible winds.

PHASE 5: THE RETURN

Regardless of whether the player characters return with a slain prey or a live captured monster, the journey back should transpire without any serious difficulty. Exceptions can be made, however, if only to maintain the suspense – a rival hunting party lies in ambush; a group of Iron Pact agents comes to avenge or free a captured prey; the stench of the trophy or noise of the captive attracts trolls, predators or swelling abominations. But otherwise we suggest that the real challenges present themselves on the characters' return to civilization.

At this point, any envious competitors become a serious problem, as do the Ironsworn who (whatever the purpose of the hunt) view the characters' actions as a crime against Creation. And unless they are hunting for sport or to mount the trophy on their own wall, the characters will probably face other challenges as they finally deliver the captured/dead creature. A quest giver may very well refuse to pay the agreed price, or claim that the reward was paid in advance. Perhaps agents of the local ruler show up, asserting that the trophy or the living beast is *"the property of the Queen"* and demanding that it immediately be handed over to its *"rightful owner?"*

Staging an Expedition

MANY ARE THOSE who have arrived at the edge of Davokar hoping to win wealth, glory and fame by plundering the ruins of the long lost empire of Symbaroum. Most will never leave town or are so ill prepared that they quickly have to turn back; most of the rest will reach their targeted site but never return. Despite this, the stream of fortune hunters never seems to dry up, probably because the few who actually make it all the way in and out often do so lugging a veritable fortune.

For the group of characters dreaming about staging an expedition into Davokar, a long and perilous journey awaits, starting long before they even set foot under the trees. And for the Game Master it should not be a problem to provide the players with exciting and testing challenges – on the contrary: adventures and campaigns dealing with treasure hunts are precisely what *Symbaroum* is built for!

Rules and guidelines for journeys through the wilderness can be found in the chapter

Readymade Ruins

In the first and fourth episode of the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns* (*Wrath of the Warden* and *Mother of Darkness*), a total of four ruins are described, complete with maps and non-player characters. These will do great as a basis for goal oriented playing. Adding to this, single adventure sites can be found in other products – as King Hurian's crypt in *Tomb of Dying Dreams*, or the isle Yeferon and the palace Farah Moroun in *Karvosti – the Witch Hammer*.

Expeditions in Davokar, starting on page 87. There you can also find tables to randomly decide the challenges of the excursion.

PHASE 1: SELECTING THE SITE

First of all, the player characters have to pinpoint the target of their endeavor. In the *Core Rulebook* several persons with knowledge about ruins in the forest are described, and adding to that there are plenty of both false and true rumors circling the taverns in town. There is also the option to get in touch with organizations like Ordo Magica or adventurous nobles, in the hope that one of these knows of a promising site and is in need of assistance exploring it.

No matter how you find your target, you can be sure that other groups of explorers also have the same target in sight. It may come to bidding wars or even physical fights over the right to a credible treasure map, so that you will have to resort to lies and manipulation or maybe even use force to lay claim to the piece of cloth, leather or paper. Or the seller may decide to take money from several different groups, which then are left to compete in a race for the treasure.

If you reach out to one of the major factions, it is likely that they already have one or more groups of freelancing explorers just waiting for the next expedition to start. In that case, the player characters need to find a way to come off as more competent than the rivals, while those rivals probably will come after them in force. Maybe two or more freelance groups even join up to sweep the newcomer off the field.

PHASE 2: FINANCING

Of course, anyone can put their boots on and wander off into the forest, but to have a reasonable chance at success the player characters must be prepared to spend a considerable sum of thaler. The cost of the Explorer's License for a month alone, covering five persons aiming to mine the soil of Davokar, can be as high as between seventy and a hundred thaler. Added to that are the cost of equipment and the salaries for any fellow companions, for example a guide and some extra sellswords.

For a group that has yet to secure the travel funds, there are numerous ways to earn thaler in Thistle Hold and other towns. The paragraph on page 51 in the *Core Rulebook* gives a hint, and in *Thistle Hold – Wrath of the Warden* you can find lots of people and organizations in need of contractors, or who can be blackmailed. Another option is to find a wealthy partner who can fund the project in exchange for a share in any future profit (see page 185 in the *Core Rulebook*). The Ambrian nobles, retired fortune hunters and prominent antique dealers are all conceivable options. In the end, maybe you would do best talking to several candidates and attempting to pit them against each other to reach the best possible agreement.

When it comes to negotiating the cost of the Explorer's License, that can be an adventure in itself. There are thaler to earn by convincing the Queen's lackeys that you possess the competence needed for the expedition and that your activities will not disturb the forest very much. And if you do not work hard to come off as pleasant and forthcoming (for instance by performing some small personal errands for the licensors) you'll most likely find your costs arbitrarily rising. Great recommendations from other treasure hunters or prominent individuals – honest ones or skillfully fabricated – can prove to be very valuable in this context.

Gaining hold of trustworthy companions can also lead to some interesting challenges. What do you do if all skilled guides are already on missions? Well, either you ask around the local fortune-hunter's district or you dare turn to some nearby goblin village in search of both guides and workers. What sellswords can you trust, after having heard stories about mercenaries ganging up on and killing their employers in their sleep?

PHASE 3: THE JOURNEY

Lots of expeditions must abort their mission before even reaching the destination, others disappear without a trace. In a forest like Davokar, the reasons behind such tragedies can be many. Packs of predators, Elven warbands, roving barbarians, rampaging rage trolls, hidden sinkholes, corrupted nature surrounding the carcass of a dead abomination – the list of dangers goes on and on.

And if the forest and its inhabitants are not enough to cause trouble, there are plenty of other possible threats. The directions you follow may prove to be misleading or vague. Treasure hunting competitors may very well trail the expedition, hoping to steal away with your loot. Or it can be that there are two, three or even more groups that are already racing to arrive first and that are not afraid to sabotage each other.

Also, problems may arise within the expedition. Infectious outbreaks, lack of discipline and outright mutinies have caused as many failures as threats from outside the group. If you, for instance, get lost or if it is revealed that what you are searching for cannot be found where you thought it to be, the risk for internal conflict increases dramatically. All of a sudden you are short on supplies, which can be disastrous if you are in a region contaminated by corruption. Quarrels may arise about whether the party should return to Ambria or keep going, and in the latter case regarding what area to head for next.

Finally, even if we would suggest that the player characters who manage to reach the target and harvest its treasure get a chance to breathe easy, everything written above is just as true when it comes to the journey back home.

PHASE 4: THE TREASURE HUNT

After reaching the alluring destination of the expedition, the next series of challenges begins. The ruins may be difficult to survey or be totally overgrown. The area can be the habitat of a flock of predators, a goblin tribe or a group of rage trolls led by an unwelcoming liege troll. Or you may discover that one or more other expeditions have already found their way to the site, and they are extremely reluctant to accommodate any competition. Irrespective of which, you first need to gain an easily defended foothold and then use force or negotiate in order to take control of the area.

Once this is done, it is time to take on the ruin or ruins. There awaits treasure in the form of art objects, artifacts and arcane knowledge that the right buyer will gladly purchase for a handsome sum. But there are also fiendish traps, the risk of collapsing floors and ceilings, labyrinthine tunnels and well-hidden pathways. And to add to the troubles, there is always the risk that the ruin's former inhabitants linger – in the form of a famished pack of Dragouls, as blight born abominations or as a long dead family of Cryptwalkers that are opposed to any intrusion into their private sphere.

In the end, it is all about surviving and leaving the place with as many of its valuables as possible. Maybe the showpiece of the ruin is extra hard to reach – hidden beyond a cruel trap, surrounded by a hoard of undead or standing on a rock in an underground lake infused with corruption. If so, the players must decide if they are to settle for more accessible loot or risk their lives trying to reach the showpiece. Or maybe they are not happy with their initial finds and agree to stay at the ruin, hoping to unearth richer loot behind rubble or some yet uncovered passage – all the while being attacked by a never ending flood of Dragouls or while some external threat closes in on the site (rival treasure hunters, attracted abominations or vindictive relatives of the group which was pacified when the player characters arrived to the area).

A totally different kind of challenge may arise for those who have scored the mother lode – deciding what to bring along and what to leave behind. No matter how many are involved in the expedition there is a limit to how much they can carry and still survive the journey home.

PHASE 5: RETURNING HOME

If the player characters manage to get back to Ambria with their loot, they must find a way to turn the valuables into the biggest earnings possible. First, the finds must be registered at one of the Queen's Legations, and when that is done the problems usually appear. Whichever precautions are taken, there is a risk that rumors start spreading about their catch, and suddenly the characters are transformed from treasure hunters to prey.

All who are occupied in trading with antiquities and treasures of knowledge will try to get their attention. Other fortune hunters will grow jealous and decide to pick a fight, or even worse: they will band together hoping to steal both treasures and lives from the player characters. A financial partner may suddenly put forth a falsified contract by which he or she is entitled to an even greater cut of the loot than what was decided before departure. In such a situation, the group who early on managed to engage a loyal and influential partner will have all the reasons for thanking their lucky star!

However, there are alternatives to the legal way. The character may for instance hide their loot and sell the objects one at a time, in some town or outpost. That way, they can avoid most of the hysteria, but will on the other hand have to worry about the secret leaking out and that someone will try to locate and attack the hiding place of the valuables.

ATCH IT, A TRAP!" Alina cried out and threw herself backwards, a hair's breadth from being impaled on a rusty iron spear.

I hurried over to help her up while my gaze swept along the walls of the throne room. Due to the vegetation that had replaced the structure's collapsed roof, they lay in night black shade.

"Ha, no worries, all's good," Alina grinned, confident as always and boldly indifferent about the dangers waiting in our path. *"But very strange, a trap here, in the middle of the hall?"*

"Right in front of the podium," Uriel muttered, as if to explain. *"There, to the right,"* the mystic continued, pointing towards a dark opening.

The stairway corkscrewed deep into the ground, more than ten meters. Judging by the accumulation of dirt and rotting leaves underfoot, no one had walked there in decades, possibly centuries. Alina stopped on the final stair, raising the lantern above her head, partially illuminating a chamber so large that the walls of the room opening before us remained swathed in darkness.

"Hm, not good," she whispered to herself, more thoughtful than worried.

I poked her shoulder, gave her an inquisitive glance.

"Wait, no worries." She gave me the lantern and started examining the walls on both sides of the opening, with eyes and fingertips. *"There has to be a latch, some form of..."*

Alina interrupted herself as a loud click echoed through the darkness. Before walking out on the floor, she turned around with a smile:

"Ha, told you so!"

Those were the final words that ever passed across her lips...

SECTION 2:

THE CHALLENGES

Advanced Traps

The treasure hunter who has not survived the encounter with a spike floor... well, she is probably dead.

THE TREASURES HIDDEN in the ruins of Davokar are often guarded by advanced machinery; many tombs and treasure chambers of Ambrian nobles are also fitted with deadly traps. Passing them undetected and unharmed is a challenge worthy of even the most experienced treasure hunter. Constructing such advanced traps requires the combined effort of engineers and trappers, and plenty of time and money. There are magical traps as well, woven by patient ritualists or carved by diligent runemasters. Such traps are particularly devious and difficult to avoid, even for a master thief.

Traps as Challenges

ALL ADVANCED TRAPS reset after being triggered or passed; they are not disarmed, but ready to trap or maim whoever comes next. Encountering and dealing with an advanced trap counts as a challenging scene in its own right and thus grants *Experience*.

A trap's difficulty level determines how challenging it is to handle. The values listed in the Modifier column in Table 11: Difficulty of Advanced Traps are used when detecting and circumventing, as well as defending against, each respective mechanism.

All mechanisms described in the next section can be of any level; the level of the specific trap encountered by the player characters is determined by the Game Master, either by rolling on or choosing from the table. All advanced traps have three features in common, which are described according to the following template:

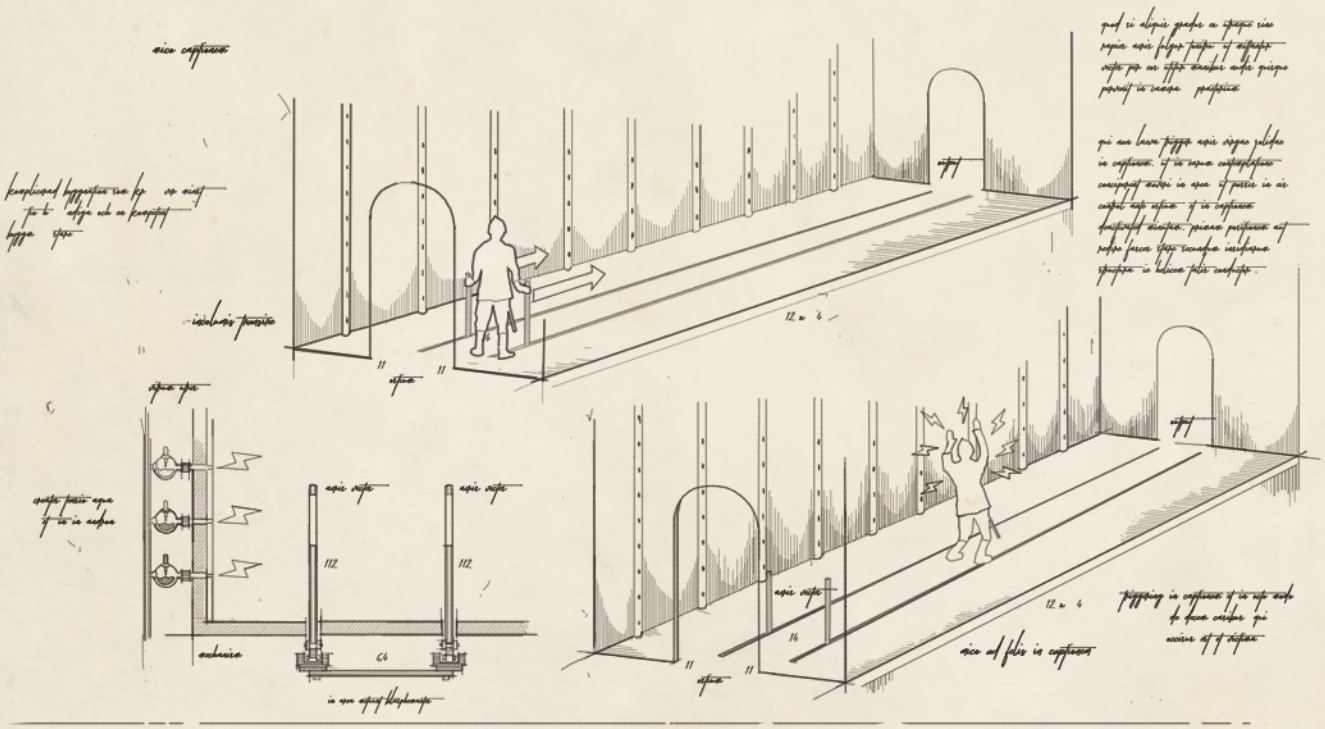
Clue: *Vigilant* or *Cunning* individuals can notice that something is wrong, and have a chance to detect the danger.

Mechanism: What happens if someone fails to detect the trap and triggers its effect – i.e. the way it deals damage. Avoiding the damage usually requires a successful *[Defense –Difficulty]* or *[Quick –Difficulty]* test. A trap that affects a victim usually makes multiple attacks at the same target, all of which must be evaded separately.

Solution: The correct way of handling the trap in order to pass it safely. The players must try to figure it out based on the clue; a player character with the *Trapper* ability can work out how to get past the trap with a successful *[Cunning –Difficulty]* test.

Table 11: Difficulty of Advanced Traps

1D20	DIFFICULTY	MODIFIER
1–7	Weak	±0
8–12	Ordinary	–1
13–16	Challenging	–3
17–19	Strong	–5
20	Mighty	–8



Traps

THE TRAPS PRESENTED below may of course be used as-is, but hopefully they can also serve as inspiration for homemade creations. If you enjoy designing death-dealing mechanisms with (more or less) tricky solutions, you are perfectly welcome to share your inventions on any of the forums where *Symbaroum* is discussed, for instance at [https://forum.frialigan.se/].

LIGHTNING GATE

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* The air in the room or corridor buzzes with power and makes the hair on one's head and arms stand on end. The focus of this energy is the closed door at the far end of the room. There are two waist-high copper rods sticking out of narrow furrows in the floor just inside the entrance to the room/corridor; the furrows run straight across to the far wall.

Mechanism: Stepping inside without grabbing both rods with one's bare hands triggers a lightning bolt that hits everyone in the room/corridor. The discharge deals 8 damage (ignores *Armor*); a successful *[Quick –Difficulty]* test reduces the damage by half. The lightning bolt dances between the walls and hits a random target a second time with the same effect, before it disappears and the lightning gate recharges.

Solution: A person gripping the copper rods will not trigger the trap. The rods can be moved through the furrows in the floor, all the way to the door; that will deactivate the trap for one minute. Then the rods either return to their original position or stay where they are, depending on the trap's design (i.e. the Game Master decides).

COLLAPSING CEILING

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* A faint bubbling sound comes from the walls, which seem to have some form of vertical trenches or rails built into them. There are stains on the floor and matching stains on the ceiling. Some of the stone floor tiles look more worn than others.

Mechanism: Stepping on one of the less worn floor tiles sends the ceiling crashing down, dealing 15 damage to everyone in the room. A successful *[Quick –Difficulty]* test reduces the damage by half and allows the victim to get out of the room. Anyone who takes full damage is trapped under the crushing ceiling and takes another 2 damage per turn (ignores *Armor*).

A person outside the room can walk in over the collapsed ceiling and pull a lever to reset the trap; it happens quickly so it takes a successful *Quick* test to get away and not be crushed as the water pressure returns the ceiling to its original position.

A successful *Quick* test allows the person to escape unharmed; on failure the person manages to get out, but takes 3 damage.

Solution: Walk on the worn floor tiles when crossing the room – no success test required. Running through the room requires a successful *Quick* test to avoid stepping on the wrong tile.

SUMMONING TRAP

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* The walls of the room are covered with mystical symbols that seem to have withstood the ravages of time alarmingly well... Reading the runes requires either the *Loremaster* or *Ritualist* ability, or training in a mystical tradition; such a person can detect which one of the following mechanisms awaits those who enter the room.

Mechanism: Anyone entering the room must either be, do, or refrain from doing, something – otherwise a monster of Challenging resistance is summoned (choose a type of monster that fits the location). Only one monster is summoned, and it will not leave the room. It vanishes if defeated or after one minute. Then a new monster can be summoned by careless adventurers.

The criteria for triggering the trap can vary, but possible options are:

- A person entering the room with a drawn weapon triggers the trap.
- A person entering the room without paying homage to the specific higher power of the place (i.e. saying positive things about Wyrtha/nature, Wielda/civilization, Wratha/corruption, etc.) triggers the trap.
- A creature with or without corruption entering the room (a holy or unholy place); the trap can be tricked by rituals and elixirs that affect corruption or the way it manifests itself.

Solution: Understanding exactly what it takes to trigger or avoid the trap requires *Loremaster*, a mystical tradition, or *Ritualist*, and a successful *[Cunning –Difficulty]* test. The mystical power *Anathema* dispels the trap for one minute; the *Break Link* ritual shuts it off for a full day.

NET TRAP

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]*. The stone tiles of the floor (or the leaves on the ground) have ropes hidden between them, which seems rather strange.

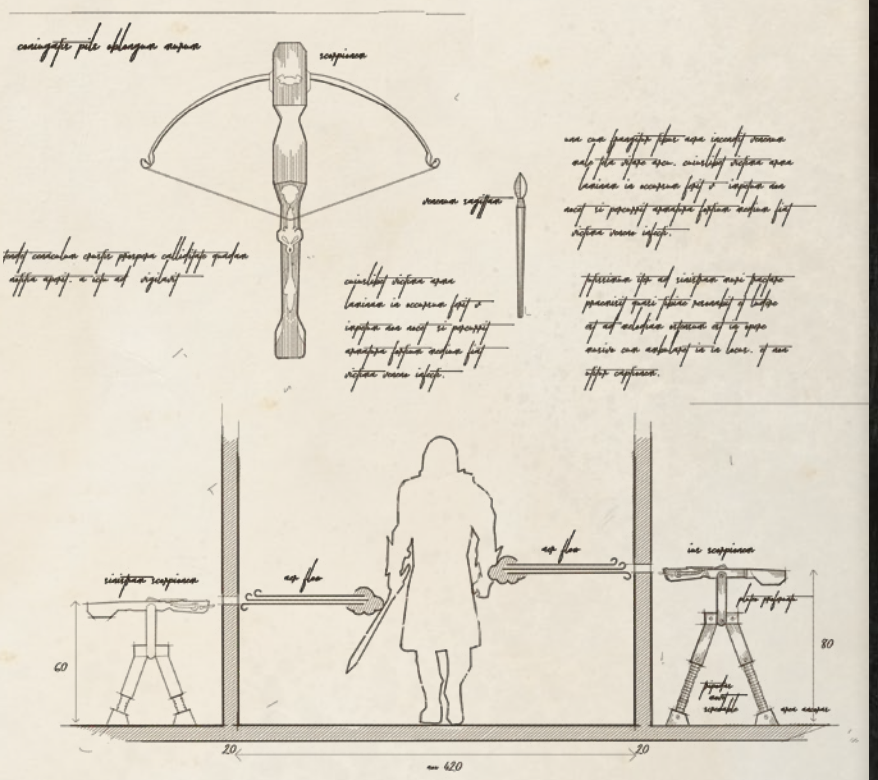
Mechanism: Each creature who enters the room rolls 1D6, one after another; if the result is lower than or equal to the number of creatures already in the room, the trap is triggered – a large net is pulled up and traps everyone high in the air, 10 meters above the floor. At the same time alarm bells are rung to alert the guards, who arrive after 1D6 turns. Breaking free requires a sharp weapon and three successful *Quick* tests (one attempt per turn); if anyone succeeds, everyone falls 10 meters to the ground.

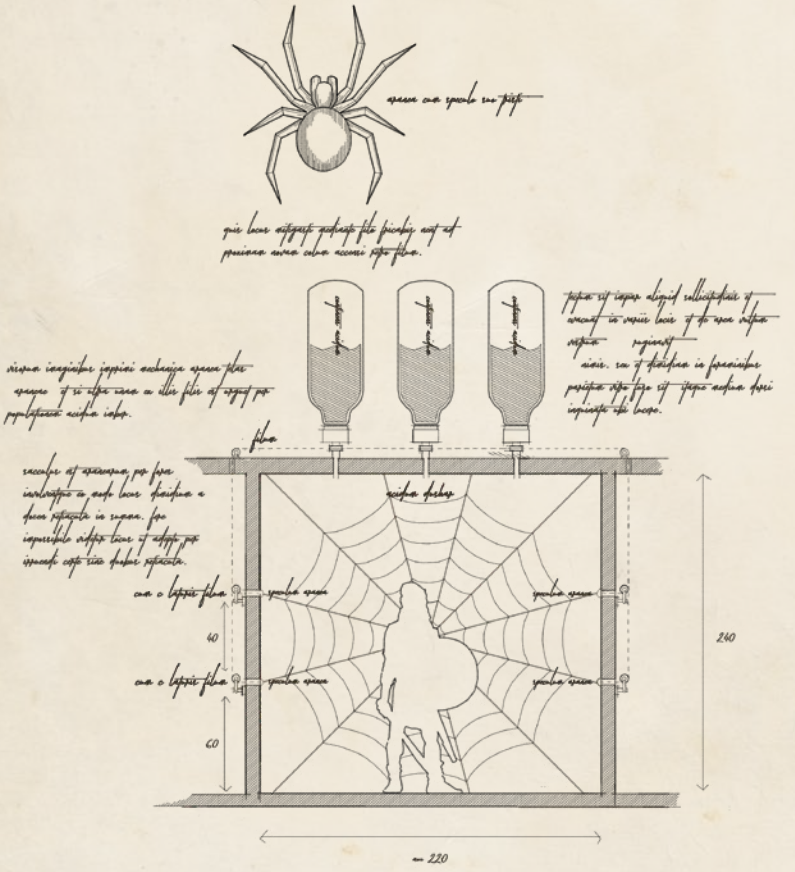
Solution: The trap can be triggered by throwing heavy objects into it (which sets off the alarm) or cutting threads so that people can walk through the net trap without triggering it *[Cunning –Difficulty]*. It takes three successful attempts – a failure triggers the trap and the alarm.

POISON PROJECTILE WALL

Clue: A successful *Cunning* test reveals that the room's mosaics depict some form of musical notes. *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* shows irregular holes here and there in the wall mosaics; they do not look like a random effect of aging. The room is full of blowing, whistling sounds, like what might come from a bunch of hoarse flutes.

Mechanism: When any of the air currents between the walls is broken in an incorrect





fashion, a poisoned projectile is fired – it takes a successful *[Defense –Difficulty]* test to avoid getting hit. Anyone who gets hit rolls *Armor* against 5; the attack itself deals no damage, but if it pierces a victim's armor, that person is afflicted with a moderate poison.

Solution: The safest way forward is to treat the left wall like a flute and play the melody shown in the mosaics while walking through the room. That way the trap will not go off.

The air currents can be avoided, at least by an agile person. It takes three successful *[Quick –Difficulty]* tests to get through the room that way; each failure releases a poisoned projectile.

SPIKE PIT

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* The floor looks uneven, and footprints in the dust suggest that those who walked through here followed a certain path across the floor.

Mechanism: Those who fall through the hatch in the floor plunge toward a set of spikes. Roll *Defense* four times to avoid getting hit by spikes dealing 6 damage each (ignores *Armor*). Player characters with the *Acrobatics* ability have a second chance of avoiding each spike.

Climbing out of the hole requires a successful *Quick* test, but failure sends the climber crashing down again, with the same result as the first time. Those who receive help, in the form of a rope or similar, have a second chance to pass their *Quick* test. A player character with *Acrobatics* automatically climbs out of the hole, no success test required.

Solution: Follow the tracks in the dust. Walking slowly requires no test, but anyone who runs must pass a *Vigilant* test to stay on the right path – otherwise they will fall down a trapdoor.

SPIKE FLOOR

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* There are odd, worrying holes in the floor, between certain stone tiles that look less worn than the others.

Mechanism: Spikes burst up from the floor; everyone in the room must pass four *[Defense –Difficulty]* tests or take 8 damage per hit.

Solution: Walk on the worn stones, which requires a successful *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* test in order to cross the room safely.

ACID SHOWER

Clue: *[Vigilant –Difficulty]* Odd, worrying holes are found here and there in the ceiling, and the floor looks badly corroded. Half a dozen glass spiders have been placed in cracks in the walls; they are dirty, except for at the middle of the back, where they are sparkling clean. Spider webs cover the path forward, half a dozen in total. It seems almost impossible to cross the room without tearing down at least a couple of the webs.

Mechanism: The silk threads are pulled by mechanical spiders, and breaking more than one of them triggers a devastating acid shower. Everyone in the room takes 6 damage for 6 turns; both the damage and the duration are reduced by half if the affected passes a *[Quick –Difficulty]* test. *Armor* protects, but drops one point of protection every turn the acid is in effect (can be repaired by someone with the *Blacksmith* ability).

Solution: One can safely pass the room by walking through a thread and rubbing the back of the nearest spider, which then starts spinning a new thread. When it is done, one simply walk through the next thread and repeat the procedure so that no more than one of the six threads is broken at the same time.One can try to cross the room with the *Acrobatics* ability, but it takes no less than five successful *Quick* tests out of six attempts to succeed: one failure (i.e. tearing down one web) is alright, but a second failure triggers the trap.

Pitched Battle

BOTH AMBRIA AND Davokar are scenes of large-scale battles in which the player characters can play a direct role or even lead one side's troops. For many gaming groups it is enough for the Game Master to describe the major developments while the player characters act as usual in specific scenes, with the larger battle as a dramatic background with no impact on the player characters' fight. For other groups it is more relevant that the overarching battle is also governed by rules, and that the player characters' actions echo in the wider context.

PRESENTED BELOW ARE rules for situations where the player characters participate on a battlefield, or lead their own combat unit during larger battles. Note that the rules are not about managing battle as a whole, but about the player characters taking part in the fighting and thus experiencing dramatic scenes. The pitched battle should be viewed as a "combat scene generator" where the player characters' success, or lack thereof, mirrors the overall course of events. The larger battle is divided into a number of combat scenes which the player characters experience first-hand, and the outcome of these smaller skirmishes affects the major developments – and vice versa.

The Phases of Pitched Battle

WITH OUR SYSTEM, a pitched battle is broken down into five phases. First you calculate or estimate the odds of the battle as a whole; this is only done once per battle. Then the player characters decide their conduct in the coming battle (heroic, moderate or cautious). They can change their conduct for every combat scene. By fighting aggressively they can contribute more to their side's success, at higher personal risk; heroes live dangerously, but can more or less decide an entire battle by fighting their way to – and taking out – the enemy's leader.

The odds and conduct determine what level of resistance the player characters will face in the upcoming combat scene; then, when the outcome of their fight has been decided, it is time to determine how it affects the battle as a whole. Phases 2 to 4 are repeated until the pitched battle has reached one of four outcomes: victory, defeat, desertion or player characters eliminated.

Battle Phases

1. Calculate the odds (once per pitched battle).
2. The player characters choose a conduct for the coming combat scene (before every combat scene of the pitched battle).
3. Roll to determine enemies of the combat scene.
4. Determine the outcome of the combat scene.
5. Calculate the outcome of the pitched battle. If any of the four outcomes are reached, the battle is over, otherwise you start over at phase 2.

Soldier Types and Terrain

Symbaroum's rules for pitched battles are deliberately abstract, to encourage fast-paced gaming. For that reason we make no distinction between soldier types (archers, infantry, cavalry), and the terrain of the battlefield also makes no difference. Gaming groups who want such factors to be taken into account are free to develop (and share?) their own system for doing so.

ODDS OF THE PITCHED BATTLE

The first order of business is to calculate the odds of the battle by determining the relative strength of the forces involved. The possible odds are 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:10. Anything in between is rounded down.

The method for determining the odds may vary from battle to battle, from gaming group to gaming group, but we suggest that you pick one of the following.

Intuitive Method: The odds are determined based on gut feeling rather than calculation. You simply choose whatever odds seem reasonable from the list and start the battle. This is particularly appropriate when the player characters do not have a lot at stake, for example when they are participating in a battle without leading it, or when a defeat would not rob them of anything important.

Simple Method: Count the number of warriors on each side of the conflict, regardless of their strength/capacity; a defending army entrenched behind fortified walls has its number multiplied by 3. This method is well-suited for battles between human armies, where the difference between the individual warriors is not that big (Weak to Challenging resistance, with the majority of the warriors at Weak).

Advanced Method: Each person participating in the battle – not including the player characters! – is assigned a point value based on their level of resistance according to Table 12: Combat Points in Pitched Battle, after which you compare the sum of both sides. This advanced method is suitable for battles where one side has several (or consists almost entirely of) monsters and warriors of Strong or even Mighty resistance).

Table 12: Combat Points in Pitched Battle

RESISTANCE LEVEL	POINTS
Weak Resistance	1 per warrior or monster
Ordinary Resistance	2 per warrior or monster
Challenging Resistance	5 per warrior or monster
Strong Resistance	10 per warrior or monster
Mighty Resistance	20 per warrior or monster
Behind Temporary Fortifications	x2
Inside Permanent Fortress	x3

No matter what method is used, the calculated value is rounded down to the nearest level in Table 13: Battle Odds. The Modification column shows what value should be used when rolling to decide the course of the battle, which is done after every combat scene.

Table 13: Battle Odds

ALLIES:ENEMIES	MODIFIER
10:1	+10
5:1	+5
3:1	+3
2:1	+2
1:1	±0
1:2	–2
1:3	–3
1:5	–5
1:10	–10

PLAYER CHARACTERS' CONDUCT

Before every combat scene the players jointly decide whether their characters should take a Heroic, Moderate or Cautious approach, which will affect the resistance they face during the combat scene.

Heroic: The player characters actively seek out the most heated part of the battle, challenge the enemy's leaders, and try to win the battle as quickly as possible – or lose in a way that will make people sing songs about their valiant demise.

Heroic conduct adds +3 to the roll on Table 14: Resistance Per Combat Scene.

Moderate: The player characters follow orders and do not back down, which sometimes places them in the heat of battle and sometimes in less dangerous situations.

Moderate conduct adds no modifier to the roll on Table 14 Resistance Per Combat Scene.

Cautious: The player characters keep clear of dangerous areas and seek out less explosive situations instead. Their actions may be considered tactical or cowardly, depending on what they did during the previous combat scene. Few allies will view the group as cowards if they regroup after a heroic effort, while a group consistently avoiding hot spots will gain a reputation for being spineless curs.

Cautious conduct results in a –3 penalty to the roll on Table 14: Resistance Per Combat Scene.

Table 14: Resistance Per Combat Scene

1D20 +MOD	DESCRIPTION	RESISTANCE	EFFECT
–5	Out of battle	There is no combat scene, and the player characters get a moment to recuperate – drinking elixirs, using healing powers, and so on. All temporary corruption the characters have accumulated (previously or during this scene) wears off before the next combat scene.	Gives –3 to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle.
6–10	On the fringe of battle	The player characters encounter [PC number of] Weak opponents.	Winning does not modify the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle; losing gives –1.
11–15	In the midst of battle	The player characters encounter [PC+1] Weak opponents led by an Ordinary enemy.	Winning gives +1 to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle; losing adds no modifier.
16–20	Critical point of the battle	The player characters encounter two waves of enemies; the first wave consists of [PC+1] Weak opponents led by an Ordinary enemy. The second wave follows immediately, with no rest in between, and consists of [PC] Ordinary opponents led by a Challenging enemy. The player characters may choose to retreat after the first wave, in which case the scene counts as a defeat.	Winning gives +3 to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle; losing adds no modifier.
21+	The moment of truth	The characters encounter three waves of enemies; the first wave consists of [PC] Ordinary opponents. The second wave follows immediately, with no rest in between, and consists of [PC+1] Ordinary opponents led by a Challenging enemy. Then there is a short break to use healing powers and drink elixirs. The final wave consists of an experienced officer/general plus bodyguards: [PC+1] Challenging enemies and one Strong enemy. The player characters may choose to retreat after the first or second wave, in which case the scene counts as a defeat.	Winning adds +5 to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle; losing adds no modifier.

Desertion: The characters might decide that the battle is lost and flee. Deserting is against the law and traditions of Ambrians and clanfolks alike, and punishable by death. Characters who run away will become wanted criminals and should expect to be hunted as deserters. Desertion also gives –1 Reputation if those rules are applied (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 108), resulting in insults like *"gutless scoundrels"* or *"deserter scum"* being thrown their way.

Note that the mass escape taking place when your side loses a battle does not constitute desertion.

RESISTANCE PER COMBAT SCENE

The player characters' conduct modifies the roll for determining the resistance during the combat scene. This is done by rolling on Table 14.

Note that the resistance is not meant to be adjusted based on how experienced the player characters are – whether rookies or veterans, the characters will face the same type of resistance at the different levels. The difference is that more competent characters can take greater responsibility (act heroically) and thus expose themselves to tougher resistance – while at the same time having a greater chance of affecting the outcome of the battle.

OUTCOME PER COMBAT SCENE

Every combat scene in which the player characters participate can have one of three outcomes: Victory, Retreat or All Player Characters Eliminated.

Victory: The player characters defeat or route all enemy troops. The characters can search fallen enemies for loot before deciding how to conduct themselves in the next combat scene.

Victory adds the specified victory modifier to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle.

Retreat: All player characters withdraw from the combat scene. They suffer free attacks from remaining enemies as usual, and must also drag any fallen comrades along. A fallen player character who remains on the battlefield stops making regular death tests and instead rolls on Table 15: Fate Table for Pitched Battles.

Retreat adds the specified defeat modifier to the roll on Table 16: The Course of the Battle.

All Characters Eliminated: All remaining player characters are eliminated during the combat scene and must roll on Table 15: Fate Table for Pitched Battles. Their fates are no longer in their hands, but in those

Ransom

As a guideline, the ransom sum depends on the individual's competence level, according to the table on page 179 of the *Monster Codex*. The amount would then be 50 thaler per level, so that it costs 150 thaler to free a Veteran. The amount should be doubled for captives with the *Privileged* boon, Negotiations require a *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test. Failure increases the amount by ×1.5; success reduces it by ×0.75.

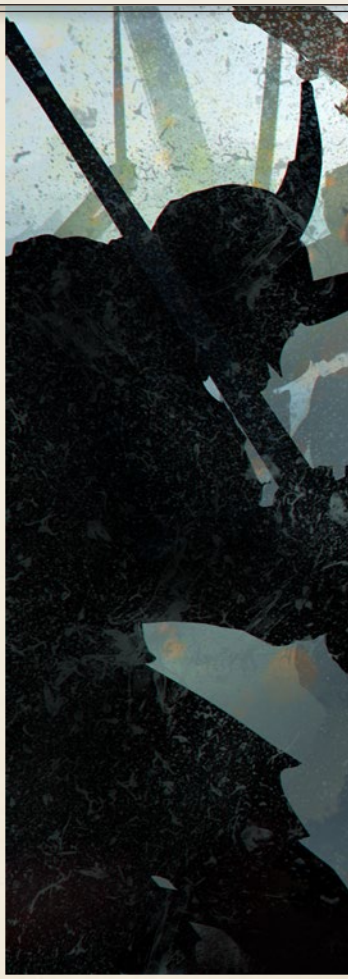


Table 15: Fate Table for Pitched Battles

1D6	FATE	EFFECT
1	Dead from wounds	The player character is left in the mud of the battlefield and dies from her wounds, once and for all.
2	Killed by enemy	The player character could have made it, but an enemy appears and ends her life. The player character and the enemy may speak briefly before the killing blow falls.
3	Captured by the enemy	The player character survives her wounds (*Toughness* 1), but is captured by the enemy. Other player characters must either come to her rescue or pay a ransom for her freedom.
4	Wakes among the dead, looted	The player character wakes up among the dead (*Toughness* 1), robbed of all money and obvious valuables, and may then act freely.
5	Wakes among the dead	The player character wakes up among the dead (*Toughness* 1) and may then act freely.
6	Saved by allies	The player character is saved by her allies (*Toughness* 1), and wakes up in the main force's encampment.

of their allies, the enemy, Prios or the dark gods of the world. Each player rolls for their character, and the character can do nothing to affect the others' rolls.

If all characters are eliminated during a combat scene, the Game Master decides how the battle ends – that is, which side wins and which side loses, or whether the battle rages on after the fate rolls have been made.

THE COURSE OF THE BATTLE

At the end of every combat scene a roll is made to determine the course of the battle.

First you roll to determine how many steps up or down the scale the battle moves. Then you check the state of the battle on Table 16: The Course of the Battle. All battles start at Stalemate, no matter the odds.

After reaching Victory or Defeat the pitched battle is over, whether good or bad for the player characters' side.

1D20 + [BATTLE ODDS] + [OUTCOME OF COMBAT SCENE]
25+ = Two steps up on Table 16
10– 24 = One step up on Table 16
0– 9 = One step down on Table 16
Below 0 = Two steps down on Table 16

Re-rolls on the Fate Table

The gaming group should decide whether to allow re-rolls on the Fate Table for Pitched Battles so that it is consistent with the risk of dying in the rest of the game. If the gaming group has a forgiving attitude towards re-rolls in general, for example with regard to death tests, it is only appropriate to be as forgiving when it comes to fate tests – that is, to make it possible for player characters to be rescued at the last minute, at the cost of one point of *Experience* or Permanent Corruption (depending on what alternative rules the gaming group is using). Conversely, if the gaming group has adopted the Direct Kill rule, no re-rolls should be allowed on the fate table either.

Table 16: The Course of the Battle

BATTLE STATUS	EFFECT
Victory	The battle is over and the player characters' side has prevailed. The enemy suffers 40+(1D4×10)% casualties in the battle and the subsequent slaughter of fleeing enemies. The player characters' side sustains 10+1D10% casualties in the battle.
Winning	No effect until the battle is over
Advantage	No effect until the battle is over
Stalemate	No effect until the battle is over (this is where the battle begins, no matter the odds)
Disadvantage	No effect until the battle is over
Losing	No effect until the battle is over
Defeat	The battle is over and the enemy has prevailed. The player characters' side suffers 40+(1D4×10)% casualties in the battle and the subsequent slaughter of their allies. The enemy sustains 10+1D10% casualties

The Player Characters as Commanders

THE RULES FOR pitched battle presented above assume that the player characters operate as an individual combat unit among their allies, without necessarily leading the entire army. But the army they are marching with may actually be their own – for instance if they rule their own domain as described in the next chapter, or if they seek to conquer some territory according to the Conquest section in the chapter on Goal Oriented Roleplaying (see page 47).

The guidelines below are meant to be used when the player characters (or one of them) are commanding an army. It is a matter of keeping one's troops in line during the march to the intended destination (the Commander Test), and also what soldiers they have at their disposal in terms of house troops and hired sellswords. You can read more about house troops in the next chapter, under Example Domains on page 77.

Note that the rules are designed for smaller armies of up to one company (roughly 100 men). Gaming groups wishing to stage larger battles, with their characters as leaders, will likely have to make certain changes and adjustments.

Table 17: Commander Test and Army Size

NUMBER OF SOLDIERS	COMMANDER TEST MODIFIER
1–19	+1
20–39	0
40–59	–1
60–79	–3
80+	–5

THE COMMANDER TEST

Keeping a marching army of agitated warriors together, and keeping them in line, is a challenge in itself. The leader (a player character or hired commander) should make a *Persuasive* test with the *Leader* ability once per day while the army is on the move. The *Dominate* ability and/or the boon *Commanding Voice* each add +1 to the test.

The size of the army, in terms of participating warriors, also affects how hard it is to steer it towards its destination. In other words, it is easier to lead a smaller force of well-drilled knights

Player characters only experience limited scenes, but will nonetheless impact the outcome of the entire battle.

Table 18: Army Misfortunes

1D20	MISFORTUNE	DESCRIPTION	EFFECT
1–4	Deserters	One tenth of the troops decide to run away, adversely affecting morale.	The commander must pass a *Persuasive* test with the *Leader* ability to instill courage in the troops; an equally large group leaves the army every day until the test succeeds.
5–7	Stragglers	The column is divided, and the rearguard is attacked by a local pack of predators.	One fifth of the troops are killed, which may be cause to recalculate the odds of the upcoming battle (see page 68).
8–10	Miserable terrain	Faulty navigation sends the army marching through rough terrain (such as wetlands)	Movement speed is reduced by half for 1D6 days, or 1D4 if the commander (or an advisor) with *Bushcraft* passes a *Cunning* test.
11–12	Diseased water	An erroneous assessment of water quality causes stomach problems for a large chunk of the army	A portion of the army is weakened for 1D6 days, or 1D4 days if a field medic (or equivalent) with *Bushcraft* passes a *Cunning* test; roll 1D4 – 1: one quarter, 2–3: half, 4: three quarters. The value of the affected is reduced by half when calculating battle odds.
13–14	Mass desertion	A significant portion of the army refuses to continue unless their pay is doubled; roll 1D4 – 1: a quarter, 2–3: half, 4: three quarters.	Affected soldiers/officers will leave the army unless their pay is increased by 100%, or 50% if the commander (or a negotiator) passes a *[Persuasive –5]* test.
15–16	Sabotage	Enemy agents set fire to the army's supply of basic necessities, elixirs and medical equipment.	The army arrives on the battlefield weakened and poorly equipped, which results in a –2 modifier to rolls for The Course of the Battle (see page 70).
17–18	Infiltration	The enemy's spies infiltrate the night camp and identify the player characters as the army's leaders and toughest fighters.	The enemy's leaders are warned to stay away from the player characters during the battle; the player characters have a –2 modifier when rolling for Enemies per Combat Scene (see page 69)
19	Nature's revenge	Lack of concentration risks leading the army into an area with Corrupted Nature (page 22 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*).	The Commander and/or an advisor must pass two tests to quickly get the troops to safer terrain, first *Vigilant* with *Bushcraft*, then *Persuasive* with *Leader*. If both tests fail, half of the troops die; one failure kills a quarter of them; if both succeed, only a tenth of the soldiers die.
20	Primal blight beast.	A huge monster of Mighty resistance suddenly appears in the army's path and may cause soldiers to flee en masse.	The Commander must (alone or with a group of confidants) engage the monstrosity within five turns. If she does not, or dies trying, the army will disperse as the soldiers flee in all directions.

Table 19: Domain House Troops

TYPE OF DOMAIN	TOTAL COMBAT POINTS	DESCRIPTION
Fortified farm	6	6 militia, Weak resistance, worth 1 point each in pitched battle
Remote village	12	12 militia, Weak resistance, worth 1 point each in pitched battle
Normal village	22	One (1) full-time guard, Ordinary resistance, worth 2 points; 20 militia, Weak resistance, worth 1 point each in pitched battle
Trading Post	25	One (1) full-time guard, Challenging resistance, worth 5 points; 10 capable adventurers, Ordinary resistance, worth 2 points each in pitched battle
Small Market Town	40	10 soldiers, Ordinary resistance, worth 2 points each in pitched battle; 20 militia, Weak resistance, worth 1 point each in pitched battle

than a large horde of pitchfork-waving peasants, even though the two armies have the same number of combat points. This is reflected in Table 17: Commander Test and Army Size, but also in Table 20: Hiring Troops, which shows that stronger and more disciplined soldiers are much more expensive to recruit.

If the Commander test succeeds, everything works out well (unless the Game Master has other surprises in store!), but failure leads to a roll on Table 18: Army Misfortunes – alternatively, the Game Master can choose an effect from the list or make up a new one. Adjust the event based on whether the army is marching through mountains, forests or plains.

HOUSE TROOPS

The size and strength of the player characters' own force depends on the size of their domain, according to Table 19: Domain House Troops.

If the house troops are brought into the field, the domain's Fortification value decreases by one level – a Normal Village gets the Fortification of a Remote Village, and so on. A fortified farm without a militia is defenseless and may not even try to defend against a potential attacker; the attacker automatically takes over the farm. Furthermore, the militia is comprised of the domain's most able-bodied individuals, so with them away on a campaign, the domain becomes one level more difficult to govern: A Remote Village gets the Management modifier of a Normal Village, and so on. You can read more on Fortification and Management in the next chapter.

MERCENARIES IN PITCHED BATTLE

An alternative to using one's own house troops is to recruit sellswords. The cost depends on the strength/competence of the mercenaries. Table 20: Hiring Troops shows how the resistance level corresponds to a number of points when calculating the odds of the battle using the advanced method (see page 68).

The price of sellswords is specified in cost per day, which is standard for warriors hired to defend something. For campaigns with hopes of loot it is possible to pay less in advance, if one also offers a future share of the spoils. The initial cost is then halved (e.g. 5 ortegs/day for a warrior of Ordinary resistance), but with the combined cost of the entire table paid in arrears – since future shares come with far greater risk than thaler paid up front, the sellswords demand a fair chance of making a decent profit.

If the spoils of war turn out to be less valuable than expected, so that the player characters are unable to pay the agreed amount, the sellswords will leave the army. They might then offer their services to the enemy instead, in the hope of payment as well as payback for being cheated.

Table 20: Hiring Troops

RESISTANCE	COMBAT POINTS	COST/DAY	EXAMPLES
Weak	1	1 ortegs	Farmhand, Fortune Hunter, Squire
Ordinary	2	1 shilling	Archer, Infantryman, Village Warrior
Challenging	5	1 thaler	Guard Warrior, Officer, Sapper
Strong	10	5 thaler	Knight, Master of the Order, Theurg

Ambrian Wars

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND the role of pitched battles and sieges in Ambria and Davokar, it may be worthwhile to study the lessons learned from the wars of the past decades, primarily the costly victory over the Dark Lords in Alberetor and the more recent invasion and occupation of Ambria.

The Great War

In Ambrian wars the odds normally favor the attacker, since Ambrian warlords are unlikely to attack without a clear advantage – they would rather build their forces over longer periods of time than attempt an attack against unfavorable odds. This is something the Ambrians learned particularly well in The Great War.

The Dark Lords' march on the west was likely preceded by many years of planning, as illustrated by their attack on the border town Berendoria in the year –21, when a massive army surprisingly marched out of Lyastra. Infiltrators in the city, in the form of sorcerers and cultists, quickly made the town's situation untenable, which became a pattern that defined the early years of the war.

It was only when Queen Korinthia's newly established Ranger Corps started operating deep within areas occupied by the Dark Lords that similar surprise attacks could be anticipated and met with a stronger defense. At the same time, the theurgs and black cloaks learned how to effectively track down and weed out darkness-worshipping traitors in Alberetor, which stopped the enemy from relying on insiders in towns and castles. The effectiveness of the witch hunters, combined with the development of alchemical siege weapons on the Alberians' side, made sieges so lengthy and expensive that the Dark Lords quickly became reluctant to engage in them at all.

Towards the end of the war, the dark hordes started circumventing their enemies' major strongholds and tried to starve them out rather than storming them. Out on the open battlefield the Queen's armies – led by mounted pansars, witch hammering templars, and battlemages – finally managed to break the dark horde. This culminated in the march on the darkened heart of Lyastra, its capital city Bright Haven, and the subsequent siege and storming of the Dark Lords' fortress. Thanks to lessons learned, Korinthia was freed and resumed command of her increasingly triumphant people, a people who came to beat the Dark Lords at their own game: siegecraft.

The Invasion of Ambria

Up north, during the occupation of Ambria, the barbarians' fatalistic view on life and death made their warriors willing to accept more equal (and sometimes even bad) odds. This fighting culture can be explained by the fact that the barbarians rarely waged long wars, but usually fought clan against clan in battles under the canopies of Davokar – bloody, to be sure, but also with ritualistic elements such as duels and taunts as important ingredients.

Before the arrival of the Ambrians, the clan chieftains usually contented themselves with driving the enemy away; crushing and destroying other clans was not their aim. Sieges were rare, since the clans had not developed the form of siegecraft that makes storming fortified positions a viable strategy. As a result, the weaker party often retreated to its stronghold and held out until the attacker got tired and left.

The barbarians' widespread hero complex was obviously to their detriment when the Ambrians established themselves on the plains south of Davokar, as death-defying clan troops attacked Ambrian armies patiently waiting behind their defenses until they had assembled enough troops to launch an overwhelming and successful offensive. But Davokar's chieftains quickly learned that this new enemy was not like the others, and clan Jezora offered considerable resistance in the form of joint armies, and abandoned their swift style of warfare in favor of troublesome raids against Ambrians on the march.

They found no effective way of countering the superior pansar cavalry, however, and after retreating into their strongholds they found themselves surrounded by an enemy who had perfected the art of siegecraft. The siege of Kadizar in the year 0 ended with the defenders capitulating after only three days, while the Jezites once again put up a brave fight against impossible odds. It was not until the year 10 that the clan and its chieftain Haloban were so utterly defeated that clan Jezora effectively ceased to exist.

The Battles of Karo's Fen

According to Ambrian doctrine, a defending commander should not accept unfavorable odds if there is any chance of retreat; sometimes there is not, especially in a war where a deliberate disadvantage in one place might create an advantage somewhere else. Before The Great War, a surrounded force could consider surrender, as it was common practice among Alberian princes to spare the lives of surrendering soldiers and military leaders.

Since the war against the Dark Lords, few Ambrian commanders have found themselves surrounded by enemies stronger than they are, but on the few occasions when it has happened, none of them have chosen capitulation; they are trained in the annihilating practices of The Great War, where no quarter was shown on either side. Thus, the first battle on clan Vajvod's territory, at the free settlement of Karo's Fen in the year 8, ended with the superior clan warriors wiping out a large Ambrian force to the last man, despite the barbarians' repeated attempts to make the intruders put down their weapons.

Ambrian junior officers have of course been in trouble in more recent times and then shown great unwillingness to surrender; however, they have often retreated by leaving behind a small force to stall the enemy. One example of this is the third battle of Karo's Fen in the year 9, where an army captain led a company supported by a troop from the Queen's Rangers. Once again the clan warriors were far more numerous than expected, and faced with devastating odds the Ambrians withdrew. The rangers volunteered to delay the enemy, with the result that the army soldiers escaped with their lives while the rangers were slain to the last scout.

Such a miscalculation would never happen again; Queen Korinthia took her time to gather her army for a decisive battle. Even though clan Vajvod had assembled its forces as well, the odds were entirely in the Ambrians' favor – they marched to attack in broad daylight and crushed their Vajvod adversaries. Afterwards, the Queen decided not to continue into Vajvod, instead occupying The Marshes up to Karo's Fen and incorporating the area into the Ambrian realm after the local heretics were burned out. A series of agreements were then signed with clan Vajvod's high chieftain, Zoltar the Old.

There were two reasons why the Queen did not continue her campaign north: an old bit of wisdom says that all battles are expensive and that a long war might bankrupt even a Queen; another aspect is that only large realms can muster huge armies, since it requires a large population and high taxation. The downside of being a large realm is that one has many enemies and a long border to defend. And so the Queen ordered the Ambrian troops to disband after the final battle of Karo's Fen, to disarm or solve more pressing issues elsewhere. She only left a ranger unit stationed near Karo's Fen to remind the Vajvod chieftains of the military might of the Ambrians.

Managing a Domain

WHY SHOULD PLAYER characters always have to run around searching for adventure when adventure is just as likely to come to them? This chapter introduces rules and guidelines for owning and managing an area of land complete with buildings and inhabitants – a domain for the characters to govern and develop.

COMING INTO POSSESSION of a domain in Ambria often involves a liege lord (baron or count) accepting a player character as a vassal and presenting him/her with a fief. It may be obtained through inheritance, marriage or as reward for great deeds. An Ambrian fief can also be taken by force, particularly in the border areas of Davokar where an armed force has occasionally captured a fort and then "offered" their services to the actual liege lord. The lord then acknowledges the vassals out of practicality as much as coercion – retaking a fort from experienced warriors is hard, and since they have already demonstrated their talent for violence they could prove useful in the chaotic borderlands.

The rules for domains can also be used for other types of areas or properties governed by the player characters, such as a free settlement or outpost in Davokar, or a remote Ordo Magica chapter. Minor adjustments would have to be made, but the basics remain the same.

Ownership of the domain gives the player characters a connection to the place, either as a focus for adventures that come to them or as a rewarding activity between adventures in other locations (during the campaign). Finally, the Game Master can use the property as an opportunity to put pressure on the player characters, for example by interrupting an adventure in the wilderness with warnings of an ongoing or potential attack on their own domain. Should they act for the common good or rush home and protect what is theirs?

The Domain in Play

ONE OPTION IS to let the domain be a common base for all player characters – it is where they come from or usually operate, and their common goal is then to protect and develop the domain. The

gaming group and its Game Master must agree on how this should work in play – the domain can either be the main focus of the game, in which case the adventure comes there, or a place of rest and distraction between adventures experienced elsewhere. Combinations are also possible, where the place is sometimes the setting for adventures and sometimes a reason for the player characters to have adventures in other hunting grounds.

The player characters can either govern the domain collectively, for example if they are leading members of a trading house or have blood ties to the family that rules the area. Alternatively, the gaming group can appoint one player character to lead – as a liege lord or mayor – with the others as confidants, servants or even serfs (difficult to play, but very interesting!). What matters is that the player characters are important and can serve as specialists that the domain depends upon; for suggestions, see Table 21 Domain Specialists.

Example: *The gaming group decides to create player characters tied to the same place, a remote Ambrian village at the edge of Davokar. One character takes on the role of knight and liege lord, and the others create characters that fit with the village: an innkeeper, the village guard captain, and the local sun priest. One of the players chooses a more challenging role as a serf serving as the knight's personal bodyguard. The serf is always present during his master's travels and meetings. The three friends constitute specialists and advisors to the liege lord, and choose the Enterprise boon or the new boon Profession to give themselves more concrete ties to the domain. The serf abstains from such ties, and acquires boons and burdens better suited for a bodyguard.*

Profession, New Boon

The player character has been given a position and a title, which comes with responsibilities as well as a regular income (usually 2 thaler a day, but the Game Master decides). The responsibilities mean that a superior decides what the player character should and should not do.

Once per adventure the player makes a test against a relevant attribute (usually *Persuasive* or *Cunning*). Failure means that some minor incident has occurred which leads to a scolding from a superior or supervisor. After failing three such tests in a row, or if the result of a test is 20, the player character loses her position and therefore the boon as well. The same applies if the player character repeatedly ignores her superior's orders.

Table 21: Domain Specialists

SPECIALIST	RECOMMENDED BOONS AND ABILITIES
Alchemist	*Alchemy*, *Enterprise* (drugstore)
Artisan	*Enterprise* (workshop or shop)
Artifact Crafter	*Artifact Crafting*, *Enterprise* (curio shop)
Blacksmith	*Blacksmith*, *Enterprise* (smithy)
Gamekeeper	*Profession* (gamekeeper), *Beast Lore*
Guard Captain	*Profession* (guard captain), *Dominate* or *Leader*
Innkeeper	*Enterprise* (inn)
Mystic	*Enterprise* (witch circle, order chapter, sun temple), any mystical tradition
Personal Guard	*Profession* (personal guard), *Bodyguard*
Soothsayer	*Enterprise* (fortune teller's hut), *Witchsight* or *Ritualist (Fortune-telling* or *Oracle)*
Spy	*Profession* (spy), *Contacts*
Surgeon	*Enterprise* (clinic), *Medicus*
Teacher	*Enterprise* (library or archive), *Loremaster* or *Tactician*

Example Domains

THE RULES FOR domains can be applied to everything from a large farm or remote village somewhere in Davokar, to a small town in the relatively safe borderlands of Ambria. The rules are less suited for domains larger than that – a person who rules an entire barony, a barbarian clan's territory, or an Ambrian city has many times more resources at her disposal and is certainly a liege lord in her own right, with many vassals at her command. For gaming groups wishing to play on such a high social and political level, the rules can provide some support, but not the full picture.

Presented below are a handful of examples of different domains that are covered by these rules. The terms used have the following meaning:

Fortification: Modifier to success tests for defending the domain against external enemies or putting down revolts.

Management: Modifier to success tests for governing the domain.

Base Income: Specifies the amount of thaler earned per season.

Pitched Battle Rules: Describes how the defense of the domain is handled when using the rules for pitched battle from the previous chapter (see page 67–73), should the Game Master and players agree to do so.

FORTIFIED FARM

The player character is a poor knight or master of a lonely farm at the edge of Davokar. The farm houses twenty people, maids and farmhands included. There are no warriors, other than the player characters, but half a dozen laborers can if necessary handle weapons in desperate defense of the farm.
Fortification: Sturdy farmhouse (–8)
Management: +8
Base Income: Single digit thaler
Pitched Battle Rules: Combat points 6. 6 militia, Weak resistance worth 1 point each in pitched battle (6 combat points); the farm has no defenses, permanent or temporary (×1 combat points when defending the domain).

REMOTE VILLAGE

The character is a knight with land on the outskirts of Ambria, or a weak barbarian chieftain or leader of a settler village somewhere in southern Davokar. The village is made up of fifty people, most of them divided into ten families. It has no full-time warriors, so the task of defending the settlement falls to the characters and a dozen able-bodied villagers.
Fortification: Palisade and tower of wood (–5)
Management: +5
Base Income: Tens of thaler
Pitched Battle Rules: Combat points 24. 12 militia, Weak resistance worth 1 point each in pitched battle (12 combat points); the village defenses count as temporary (×2 combat points when defending the domain).

NORMAL VILLAGE

The player character is a knight in a domain located in the Ambrian heartland, or an established chieftain among the barbarians in Davokar. The village has a population of about one hundred people, including twenty families. It has a full-time guard or bailiff to organize the twenty poorly equipped villagers that serve as defenders.
Fortification: Palisade and tower of stone (–3)
Management: +3
Base Income: Tens of thaler
Pitched Battle Rules: Combat points 66. One (1) full-time guard, Ordinary resistance worth 2 points, and 20 militia, Weak resistance worth 1 point each in pitched battle (22 combat points); the village defenses count as permanent (×3 combat points when defending the domain).

TRADING POST

The character belongs to a merchant family in Ambria and is the manager of a trading post on the outskirts of Ambria or the borderland between Ambria and Davokar. The outpost is populated by roughly a hundred people, half of them permanent residents (ten families) and the rest either long- or short-term visitors. The fort has one guard and many of the residents and visitors can take up arms if the need arises.
Fortification: Wooden fort (–1)
Management: +1
Base Income: Hundreds of thaler
Pitched Battle Rules: Combat points 75. One (1) full-time guard, Challenging resistance worth 5 points, and 10 capable adventurers, Ordinary resistance worth 2 points each in pitched battle (25 Combat points); the trading post's defenses count as permanent (×3 Combat points when defending the domain).

SMALL MARKET TOWN

The character is a baron or baroness in Ambria and governs a small town, a place of trade and craft sheltered behind walls of stone. The town has a population of five hundred people, most of whom are residents (eighty families) and the rest (about a hundred people) visitors, mainly farmers from nearby villages. The town has a guard force and fire brigade of ten soldiers, led by the most experienced of them. Its population is ill-prepared – and even worse equipped – to fight for themselves; it is something they have long left to others in order to focus on their professions.
Fortification: Wall and fort of stone (0)
Management: 0
Base Income: Thousands of thaler
Pitched Battle Rules: Combat points 120. 10 soldiers, Ordinary resistance worth 2 points each in pitched battle, and 20 militia, Weak resistance worth 1 point each in pitched battle (40 combat points); the town's defenses count as permanent (×3 combat points when defending the domain).

Bookkeeping

It is important for at least one of the players to keep a detailed record of revenue, expenditures and investments, preferably with the Game Master's help. Once the profits have been collected and potential investments have been made, the player calculates the cash balance and adjusts the contents of the coffers accordingly. The player characters are of course free to add money out of their own pockets, if they so wish, or dip into the coffers for personal use.

Management and Development

THE MANAGEMENT OF a domain takes place on a seasonal basis (four times a year), and each season is handled in three steps.

1. Major event
2. The Management test
3. Possible investments

MAJOR EVENT

Every season there is a chance (depending on the season) of something unexpected happening in a domain. In spring and autumn there is a 50% chance of something big happening; the darkness, rain and cold of winter reduces the chance to 25%, while the summer's light and warmth make it 75 %.

Table 22: Events in the Domain

1D20	EVENT	EFFECT
1	A plague ravages the domain	The plague adds a –1D6 penalty to Management tests every season until it has been eradicated with a successful *Cunning* test from someone with the *Medicus* ability. One attempt per season is allowed, and *Alchemy* adds +1 to the test.
2	Brigands on the road	The brigands hinder travel and trade, giving –1D4 to Management tests every season until they are defeated or driven away.
3	Monsters in the area	Monsters are wreaking havoc, (1D4) 1: group of rage trolls, 2: elven warband, 3: arch troll, 4: lindworm. The monster(s) adds a –1D6 penalty to all Management tests until defeated or driven off.
4	Crop failure	Crop failure strikes the region for 1D8 seasons, during which time a –1D4 penalty to all Management tests is in effect.
5	Riot	It takes a successful *Persuasive* test to handle the riot; the abilities *Dominate* and *Leader* each add +1 to the test. Failure inflicts a –1D4 penalty to the season's Management test.
6	Serial killer on the loose	A murderer is killing 1D4–1 victims per season. The killer must be stopped, otherwise a cumulative –1 penalty is added to each season's Management test; in other words, after three seasons the modifier is –3, which is the maximum.
7	Gang on a robbing spree	Until the gang is stopped, a cumulative –1 penalty is added to each season's Management test; in other words, after three seasons the modifier is –3, which is the maximum.
8	Trade proposal	A delegate shows up with a trade agreement that adds +1 to Management tests for 1D4 seasons.
9	Wave of refugees	The refugees cause –1 to Management tests for 1D8 seasons, then 0 for 1D8 seasons, and finally the established refugees add a permanent +1 bonus to all Management tests.
10	Distinguished guests	A wealthy group of people, perhaps a mercenary company or a traveling carnival troupe, boosts trade in the domain. Then they move on. The visit adds +1 to the season's Management test.
11	Visiting liege lord	The leader's liege lord comes to visit accompanied by an entourage of warriors, advisors and courtiers. Such a visits calls for a feast, for princes and commoners alike. It adds +1 to the current season's Management test, then –2 to the next one.
12	Call for aid	A neighboring domain is in crisis and requests assistance. Heeding the call initially modifies the current season's Management test by –1. Then there is a 50% chance of the neighbor emerging from the crisis stronger and grateful for the help, adding +2 to the next season's test.
13	Cultist infiltration	Rumors of strange figures and unholy meetings are circulating, and soon people start disappearing – mostly vagrants, homeless beggars and other down-and-out individuals. As long as the cultists are influencing life in the domain, all Management tests are modified by –1. The cultists are not easy to get rid of.
14	Settlers moving in	The settlers give a 0 modifier to Management tests for 1D8 seasons, after which the established settlers add a permanent +1 bonus to all Management tests.
15	Missionaries arriving	(1D6) 1–2: Witches, 3–4: Church of Prios, 5–6: The Young Gods. If they adhere to the same faith as the leader of the domain, the missionaries raise a temple that adds a permanent +1 to Management tests. If the missionaries do not share the leader's faith, their presence causes unrest: –2 to Management tests for 1D8 seasons, then 0 effect for 1D8 seasons, and finally a permanent +1 from then on. If they are driven away during the initial phase, the missionaries go into hiding and keep recruiting souls in secret, which means a permanent –1 to all Management tests. Rooting them out is bloody work (or smoky, if one prefers fire over steel) and causes –1D4 to Management tests for 1D4 seasons.
16	Bad omen	Seers are reading bad omens; roll on the table until you get a negative event, which then occurs within 1D4–1 seasons.
17	Good sign	Seers are seeing good signs; roll on the table until you get a positive event, which then occurs within 1D4–1 seasons.
18	Tempting treasure deposit	A treasure deposit attracts fortune hunters to the area for 1D6 seasons; roll again if the result is 6; another 6 means that their stay is permanent. Their chaotic presence has a 50% chance of giving either +2 or –1 to Management tests for the duration of their stay.
19–20	Military attack	(1D4) 1: Barbarians, 2: Elves, 3: Another vassal of the same liege, 4: Abominations. (1D6) 1–3: The enemy force is rather weak (+5), 4–5: The enemy force is equal to the task (0), 6: The enemy force is overwhelming (–5). The leader of the domain may choose to Flee, Negotiate or Fight. For more details, see the sidebar Under Attack on the next page.

Under Attack

ENEMY

Barbarians: Barbarians attack from Davokar in search of plunder. The leader of the domain may choose to negotiate, fight or flee.

Elves: Elves attack in an attempt to drive away the local inhabitants. The leader of the domain can either fight or flee. Elves do not negotiate.

Another vassal: Another vassal of the same liege attacks in order to annex the domain. The attack could be launched under the pretext of some old border dispute or a false accusation of crime or heresy. The leader of the domain can choose to flee, negotiate or fight. Fleeing means that the domain is annexed by the attacker and can only be retaken by force.

Horde of abominations: A horde of abominations swarms out of the forest, with destruction as their only goal. The leader of the domain can fight or flee. The horde cannot be negotiated with.

STRATEGIES

Flee: The domain's inhabitants flee to other areas, either allied territory or inaccessible land where the enemy cannot easily (or does not want to) follow. The domain is destroyed, but most of its people survive. The returning inhabitants have a hard task ahead of them – the Management modifier during the reconstruction is reduced by –5 for 1D6 seasons, and then a permanent –2.

Negotiation: The negotiation concerns the price it takes for the enemy to break off its attack. The leader of the domain rolls *[Persuasive←Resolute]*; the *Dominate* ability adds +1 on both sides. On success, the tribute is –2 on Management tests for one year (four seasons), after which it returns to normal. On failure the tribute is –4 for the first year, and then a permanent –1.

Fight: The enemy attacks. The guidelines from the chapter on Pitched Battles can be applied to determine which side is victorious. The alternative is to handle the battle abstractly as described below. No matter what method is used to determine which side prevails, the effect of victory or defeat remains the same.

Abstract method of deciding the battle's outcome: The leader of the domain makes a *Persuasive* test modified by its Fortification. A +1 modifier is added if he or she has the *Leader* ability, and if the leader or an advisory specialist has the *Tactician* ability another +1 is added.

On success the enemy is driven off and what has been destroyed is rebuilt in 1D4 seasons, during which time Management tests are modified by –2. Then the domain is fully restored.

On failure the domain is lost and surviving inhabitants are forced to flee. See Flee. The effect is much worse, though, since many will have died in battle or had their spirit broken by the defeat. The Management modifier during the reconstruction work is reduced by –5 for 1D12 seasons and then by a permanent –2.

Spring: Major event occurs on 1–10 on 1D20
Summer: Major event occurs on 1–15 on 1D20
Autumn: Major event occurs on 1–10 on 1D20
Winter: Major event occurs on 1–5 on 1D20

Player characters in charge of a domain are expected to solve any problems that arise. Those who own property or dwell in the domain will suffer or benefit from what happens, depending on whether the event is positive or negative. Characters living in a domain may of course volunteer to solve its problems in order to protect their own property.

If the listed event does not fit the characters' domain or the overall situation, make another roll – or create an event better suited to the circumstances.

THE MANAGEMENT TEST

The domain is managed on a seasonal basis (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) and during each season a Management test is made. They are easier in summer (+1) and harder in winter (–1). Summer means crops, increased traveling, and high productivity. In winter the stores are slowly depleted, people travel less, and productivity decreases. Spring and autumn do not modify the test.

Maintenance: The player character who manages a domain and is present for most of the season makes the Management test – it is rolled against *Persuasive*, modified by the domain's Management value. In the leader's absence a replacement must be brought in to make the decisions; even if the leader's player makes the test, it is rolled against the replacement's *Persuasive*.

After a success the difference is calculated; each point of difference yields the Base Income specified for the season.

Example: *The knight Karala governs a remote village in northern Ambria. Every season she makes a Persuasive test modified by the domain's Management [+5]. No other modifiers affect the village this season. Karala has Persuasive 11 and rolls against 16 [11+5]. This spring she rolls a 13, which is 3 below the requirement. Since her remote domain yields tens of thaler in income, Karala collects 30 thaler this season.*

Similarly, a failure costs the specified Base Income multiplied by the difference. If the player character is unable or unwilling to pay, the domain's Management value is instead decreased by one step. If the value drops below –8 the domain collapses and ceases to exist as a cohesive entity; it goes bankrupt, is abandoned, or similar.

Example: *Summer comes, and Karala is hard at work governing her remote village. Once again she makes the Management test. She must roll 17 or lower, since she now has +1 because of the season. The die lands on 19; a failure with a difference of 2. She must either pay 20 thaler to the domain or accept that future Management tests will be rolled with a +4 modification instead. Muttering something about lazy peasants, she takes 20 thaler from the coffers to mend the domain's economy.*

INVESTMENTS

Investments are money spent on improving the domain. The improvement can be made to either Fortification, Management or Base Income.

Ten times the domain's Base Income must be spent to make any difference, and the player must describe in what way the domain is improved. The effect of an investment on Fortification or Management is that the modifier in question increases by one step. However, the Fortification modifier can never exceed +5.

An investment in Base Income increases the domain's income by 10% of the original value; if the Base Income is tens of thaler, each investment yields a one thaler increase. A Base Income of single-digit thaler means that each investment adds an extra shilling for every thaler earned, while a Base Income of hundreds or thousands of thaler increases the total by ten and a hundred thaler respectively. The Base Income can never be more than doubled (double amount of thaler, scores of thaler, two hundreds of thaler, or two thousands of thaler). The domain's productivity cannot be improved beyond that; it is running at more or less maximum efficiency, given the conditions of the area.

Example: *The knight Karala invests in her domain, the remote village. Whatever she decides to improve the cost is 100 thaler: the domain's income is tens of thaler, and investments cost 10 times that. Her first investment is to raise the village's Fortification from (–5) to (–4). The Game Master asks Karala's player to describe the nature of the improvement: Karala constructs a stone tower to replace the old wooden one. The next investment she makes is to improve the village's income. With a Base Income of tens of thaler, the income is raised to 11 thaler. Karala decides that this increase in productivity is due to the construction of a watermill.*

Example: Investments

FORTIFICATION
Constructing more watchtowers, hiring more soldiers, building higher walls, providing better equipment for the militia, digging a moat, placing ballistae on walls, recruiting a guard captain, increasing the supply of water, food and other necessities.

MANAGEMENT
Hiring a tax commissioner, arresting troublemakers, fighting corruption, building a village school, investing in a temple or poorhouse, reorganizing the bookkeeping, investing in the judicial system, setting up a system of informers among the population.

INCOME
Building a road, a bridge or ferry across an old ford, constructing a harbor, or digging a canal, draining a marsh, clearing a forest, building a brewery, or open an inn.

Mercenaries in the Domain

IF THE CHARACTERS' domain is attacked by a hostile force (see Table 22), there are two ways of handling the challenge. You can either use the rules for pitched battles presented in the previous chapter, or the abstract method based on the domain's Fortification value (see page 80). What both methods have in common is that the number of combat points affects the outcome (see Table 20 Hiring Troops on page 73).

Here are some guidelines for handling mercenaries according to the abstract model.

EFFECT ON FORTIFICATION

In order to play a decisive role, the hired sellswords must at least match the house troops in terms of combat points. To reinforce a normal village (22 points) one must add sellswords worth an equal or higher number of combat points to get +1 to tests against Fortification when defending the domain. 22 local farmhands could get the job done, or two knights and their two squires. Every time the reinforcements reach the house troops' combat points, a +1 bonus is granted: two knights, two squires and 20 fortune hunters would give +2, as they triple the house troops' value.

EFFECT ON MANAGEMENT

A complicating factor is that the increased troop presence risks destabilizing the domain. When it is time for the Management test, the characters suffer a –1 penalty for each time the number of sellswords exceeds that of the house troops (militia included).

Unlike in the case of Fortification, it is the number of soldiers that matters, not their combat points – a fortified farm has 6 defenders, a remote village has 12, a normal village 21, and so on. In other words, leaders who can afford it are better off hiring more professional (and therefore more expensive) soldiers rather than filling their domains with huge numbers of fortune hunters and armed farmhands.

Example: Mercenaries

A robber baron is plaguing the region, and the characters decide to station mercenaries in their small market town. Their current defense force is comprised of 10 professional soldiers and 20 militia, for a total of 30 warriors. This means that every time they pass a multiple of 30 additional sellswords (31, 61, 91, etc.) they get –1 to the Management test: –1 for 31 troops, –2 for 61, and –3 for 91.

The cheapest option is to hire loads of ill-trained warriors, such as the local goblin tribe. But the domain is hard enough to govern already; perhaps it is worth paying for a couple of freelancing knights and a wizard willing to sell their services in defense of the town? That way they could obtain a much-needed Fortification bonus without diminishing their chance of passing the Management test.

Social Challenges

THERE ARE DEFINITELY tensions between the game world's various factions and their leaders – their relationships range from strained to downright hostile. In one way or another, the player characters and their actions will almost certainly affect, and be affected by, these tensions. Whatever they do, their deeds will be applauded by some groups and criticized, or outright condemned, by others.

Scheming

THE BASIC MECHANIC governing all interactions is the *Persuasive* test, often modified by the target's *Resolute* value. There are often faction-specific modifiers to consider as well, and a certain status which the players can earn during their adventures. Also, note that *Persuasive* can often be replaced by another attribute, as different factions praise, seek out or are impressed by different characteristics.

GLOSSARY

Table 23 indicates what the various factions like, dislike and are impressed by. The column headings should be interpreted as follows:

Leader: The faction's most powerful and influential individual/individuals. Other members are likely to share their views, but may also deviate from the faction's official line – no faction is without internal conflicts.

Impressed by: All representatives of a faction can be influenced with a successful *Persuasive* test, but most of them also have another attribute which they admire and appreciate in their allies. This attribute can replace *Persuasive* in interactions with faction representatives.

Likes: Indicates whether the faction is particularly fond of a certain race or occupation. Obviously, they usually have an affinity for their fellow faction members, but also for other close allies. Those who fit the description gain a positive modifier of +1 when interacting with the faction.

Table 23: Factions of the Game World

FACTION	LEADER	IMPRESSED BY	LIKES	DISLIKES
House Kohinoor	Korinthia Nightbane, Beremo Herengol	Cunning	Ordo Magica	Barbarians, Ironsworn, Blight-marked
Ordo Magica	Grand Master Seldonio	Cunning	Ambrians	Varies
The Priesthood	First Father Jeseebegai, Brother Eumenos	Resolute	Worshippers of Prios	Witches, Ironsworn, Heretics, Blight-marked
The Templars	Iakobo Vearra	Strong	—	Witches, Ironsworn, Heretics, Non-humans, Blight-marked
The Witches	The Huldra Yeleta	Resolute	Witches	Sun knights, Explorers, Blight-marked
The Iron Pact	Elori, Prince Eneáno	Vigilant	Ironsworn	Sun knights, Explorers, Nobles, Blight-marked
The Sovereign's Oath	Razameaman, Odralintos	Strong	—	Witches, Ambrians, Blight-marked
Sacred of the Old Blood	Duke Sesario, Esmerelda	Discreet	Nobles	Ordo Magica, Worshippers of Prios

Dislikes: Indicates whether the faction has a particular loathing for a certain race or occupation. Those who fit the description, possess the relevant attributes, or are heard praising them, suffer a negative modifier of –1 to all success tests when interacting with the faction.

It should be noted that people are often thought to be members of a faction because they *"look and sound like it."* Individuals claiming to belong to a certain category are usually believed, and those who openly express strong support for one category risk being thought of as one of them, and labeled with epithets like *"witch worshipper"* or *"elf lover."*

The following categories are relevant to what the factions like/dislike. The categories are not mutually exclusive and they have no common, systematic point of reference – just like it can be with preconceptions in general.

Ambrians: People of Ambrian heritage
Ordo Magica: Members of Ordo Magica
Barbarians: People of barbarian or mixed heritage
Non-humans: Elves, changelings, dwarves, ogres, goblins and trolls
Witches: People who share the witches' attributes, abilities and views
Worshippers of Prios: People who look like Worshippers of Prios
Heretics: People who hold heretical views, or seem to have a bad influence on others
Blight-marked: People exhibiting physical stigmas
Explorers: People who, for one reason or another, probe the ruins of Davokar
Nobles: Ambrians of noble blood
Ironsworn: Members of the Iron Pact

PLAYER CHARACTER SCHEMING

At the end of this book there is a simple form which the Game Master can use to keep a record of the player characters' status with each faction, updating it as they go about their lives and adventures (page 151). If the characters have already been in contact with representatives of the various factions, the Game Master must (preferably together with the players) assess their previous encounters and determine a starting value, which could be positive or negative.

Whether they start at 0 or have an already established relationship, each player character will have an individual status value for each faction. This means that one character can enjoy a positive status with one faction, while others might have a neutral or even negative status – which, needless to say, ought to be taken advantage of as the players interact with the factions.

Below are examples of deeds which can affect a player character's status with a faction, either positively or negatively. Note that the change in status requires that the character is recognized by the factions, makes herself known to them, or that she can take credit (convincingly!) for what happened.

Sides with: Is often heard praising or expressing support for the faction:

Maximum +1 and must be maintained by making public remarks, or the modifier will expire after 3 months.

Design Premise 4: Everyone Speaks

The idea behind the rules for social challenges is that scheming should be the concern of the whole group, rather than something handled by one character specialized in that particular field. Sure, a high *Persuasive* value is always good, and there are boons that are helpful in all kinds of negotiations, but with the guidelines presented here, there are still reasons to ponder if someone else, other than the party's usual negotiator, should speak for the group in certain situations.

Complete mission: Successfully completes a specific mission for the faction:

Maximum +1 and must be maintained by completing further missions, or the modifier will expire after 6 months.

Complete adventure: Brings about an outcome that benefits or pleases the faction:

+1 per adventure (maximum +3), and must be maintained, or the status decreases by 1 every 3 months.

Eliminate enemy: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking representative of the faction's enemy:

+1 or +2, depending on the victim's rank.

Side against: Is often heard denouncing or denigrating the faction:

Maximum –1, and must be maintained by making public remarks, or the modifier will expire after 3 months.

Complete adventure: Brings about an outcome that is detrimental to, or angers, the faction:

–1 per adventure (maximum –3) and must be maintained, or the status decreases by 1 every 3 months.

Eliminate ally: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking ally/friend of the faction:

–1 or –2, depending on the victim's rank.

Eliminate representative: Kills or otherwise disposes of a high-ranking representative of the faction:

–2 or –3, depending on the victim's rank.

Fraternize with enemy: Frequently fraternizes with the killer of a high-ranking representative of the faction:

Maximum –1, expires when there has been no fraternization for 3 months.

The player characters might suffer/enjoy the effects of the schemes whether they want to or not, but they can also take active part in them. Such participation could involve making careful decisions as to who will speak for the group, having someone wait outside, concealing or acquiring symbols for deceptive purposes, smearing enemies by spreading false rumors, or even disguising themselves in order to sabotage relations between enemy factions. This devious game is being played by many, in all kinds of contexts, and if the characters do not put in some serious effort, a faction might choose someone else to carry out their missions – someone who has made sure to discredit the characters in the eyes of the faction.

Hiding one's affiliation with a certain faction normally requires a successful *[Discreet←Vigilant]* test, while posing as a member of another group is more difficult and requires a *[Persuasive←(Vigilant+3)]* test. Usually, it is not possible to convincingly impersonate a specific individual, but it could be, if one possesses the relevant abilities, traits, boons, or equipment. That is for the Game Master to decide.

EFFECTS OF THE SCHEMING

The player characters will be faced with a number of situations where they have to interrogate or negotiate with others. Usually, this is done by having the characters flatter, threaten or argue with an individual, whereupon the one with the highest *Persuasive* value makes a *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test. If the test is successful, the characters receive the information they are looking for or achieve their negotiation goals.

If these advanced rules for scheming are applied, the player characters' relations with the faction must also be taken into account, by adding a modifier to each character's *Persuasive* based on what faction the opposite party belongs to (see table 23) and what status they hold within that faction.

Example: *Grumpa the Ogre (with 7 in Persuasive, 11 in Strong, and 15 in Resolute) is known for speaking highly of witches and for having destroyed a Templar-administered excavation on one of her adventures. If she was to negotiate with the Huldra on Karvosti, her effective Persuasive (replaced by Resolute) would be 17 [Resolute 15, +1 for praising witches, +1 for a pleasing outcome of the adventure = 17]. On the other hand, if she negotiated with Alisabeta Vearra, her effective Persuasive (replaced by Strong) would be 9 [Strong 11, –1 for a displeasing outcome of the adventure, –1 for being non-human = 9]. In that case, perhaps Grumpa should stand back and let someone else speak for the group...*

Additional Modifications

IN AN EFFORT to give social challenges extra depth, and also provide them with greater tactical complexity, here we introduce four suggestions related to the individual, rather than to the factions. Before the *Persuasive* test is rolled, the faction modifiers are taken into account; then, additional modifications can come into play depending on which individuals are involved in the negotiations.

SOCIAL DISTANCE

Race and nationality aside, the distance between individuals in the social hierarchy can be a complicating factor when it comes to communication in general, and especially if one of the parties is trying to influence the other. It is not only that the more prominent person looks down on "commoners"; there may very well exist a level of distrust and prejudice that works in the other direction. Furthermore, individuals from different social classes tend to speak and reason somewhat differently, which adds to the difficulties.

A simple way to handle this is by taking into account the traits *Privileged* and *Pariah*, which, when combined with persons without any such trait, form a three-step-scale:

Privileged – neither – Pariah

If the negotiating parties are on the same step, no modification is made. If the difference between them is one (1) step, the active party suffers a –1 modification on its tests, or –2 if one of them has *Privileged* and the other *Pariah*.

FACTION AFFILIATION

In addition to the distinction Likes/Dislikes, the active party in a social challenge may gain a general +1 bonus if both parties are active members in the same faction. In order for this to come into effect, having the same sympathies is not enough (for instance, believing in the Lawgiver or fighting for House Kohinoor) – they must both have official positions within an organization, order, army, church or similar.

LIKES AND TASTE

Specific individuals are not always impressed by the same attributes as their faction at large – a commander in the Queen's army may be impressed by *Strong* (instead of *Cunning*), and a single village witch can be impressed by *Discreet* (instead of *Resolute*).

Among other things, this fact may be used to force the player characters to do research before taking on the social challenge, to learn more about the particular person they will be negotiating with.

ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP

If the gaming group likes to make use of that which is called Degrees of Success (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 172), the following may be appealing:

If the success test in a negotiation (usually *[Persuasive←Resolute]*, with a certain modification) succeeds with a difference of 5 or more, this means that the negotiating parties get along unusually well; they really hit it off and the connection between them will have a positive impact on future meetings. The player whose character handled the negotiation gets to pen down the name of this new friend on the character sheet, and next time the two individuals are negotiating, the active party has a +3 bonus to the test.

If instead the success test fails with a difference of 5 or more... Well, then the meeting ends in quarreling and bad blood. Again, the player takes note of the name, because next time these two individuals meet to negotiate the active part has a –3 modification. Maybe it is best to let someone else speak for the player characters...

The modification from personal relationships can never be higher than three, positive or negative. But it can change, of course – should an active party with a +3 bonus fail with a difference of 5 or more, then the relationship bonus between the individuals reverts to ±0.

The People of Ambria and Davokar

THE FOLLOWING RUNDOWN of the various social groups that characterize the Davokar region has no rules related implications, but may be useful to Game Masters when describing individuals the characters see or come into contact with. Both Ambrian society and the clans are based on a hierarchical structure, and sometimes it may seem like Ambrians and barbarians of similar status have more in common than an Ambrian crofter and the village blacksmith.

THRALL

Thralls are found among the barbarians, either born into servitude, taken captive in battle, or held in bondage for unpaid debts. Thralls are considered property and thus have no rights. Killing them amounts to destruction of property. Thralls cannot own anything, but rely on their owners for food, shelter and tools. Healthy thralls are a status symbol among barbarians, but spoiling them is considered a sign of weakness – *"at the hold of Chieftain Lardos even the thralls are fat"* is a way of saying that Chieftain Lardos is both rich and weak in spirit.

CROFTER

Crofters rent a plot of land and pay for it with hard labor in the landowner's fields. Every month a crofter family receives roughly an orteg's worth of surplus crops. This is often traded for everyday luxuries at the local market; some families save it in the hope of one day owning a farm of their own.

DAYTHALER
Daythalers are the crofters of the towns, workers who give their bodies to hard labor such as construction. The wage for manual labor in the cities is an orteg a day, which just about covers the minimum expenses of living there.

SOLDIER
Ambrian soldiers are entitled to a small plot of land which provides their families with a meager subsistence, while the soldiers serve in the army. A soldier's salary is one orteg a week, but then all the soldier's expenses are covered by the army, including weapons and armor.

MERCENARY
Sellswords normally earn a shilling a day as infantrymen, but must pay for their own weapons and armor. Mercenary cavalry – where the warriors provide their own horses – are paid 10 shillings a day, with a maintenance cost of almost as much, at least if there is a family to support. Mercenaries like crossbowmen, pikemen and light cavalry can make good money, at a very high risk of mutilation, death and unemployment once peace is restored. Long wars can easily empty the war chests, in which case the mercenaries are only paid in booty, which contributes to further brutalization during the conflict.

YEOMAN FARMER
Self-owning farmers earn about a shilling a day in produce from their own farm which, but for a couple of ortegs, is also the cost of living, taxes and farm maintenance. Many yeomen farmers also serve in their liege lord's army a certain number of days per year – usually 30 days per year as archers – in exchange for reduced taxes. This increases the farm's surplus to half a dozen ortegs per day, and farms with a tradition of archery can grow into large-scale operations, with their own crofters and a more comfortable life for the family – if the farmer survives the military service, that is.

ARTISAN
Ambria's strong guild system allows artisan families to earn one shilling a day, which, after food and beverage expenses, rent and tool maintenance, leaves several ortegs for a comfortable life or a future investment. The guilds are very keen to keep the number of artisans from growing too large, to ensure good wages for their members. Barbarian artisanship is simpler, but regulated by the fact that each village may only have one artisan of each type, which has a similar effect.

MERCHANT
Traders in Ambrian cities often make one thaler a day and count their expenses in shillings, which allows many merchant families to grow rapidly in status and pomp. Some also marry into declining noble houses to get a fancier name for their business.

KNIGHT
Heavily armored cavalry is the backbone of the Ambrian army. It costs one thaler per day to keep a knight with a family appropriately housed and provide combat equipment like two horses, heavy armor, lance, sword and shield. Some knights are freelancers, landless nobles in a prince's service, but the majority are landowners themselves and princelings in their own right.

NOBLE
Barons and their families live on 100 thaler a day, which is not so strange considering that politics and festivities are intimately connected. A class-appropriate lifestyle is viewed as the foundation of a trustworthy individual, and tournaments, lavish parties, and purchasing the goodwill of important guilds are all common practice to achieve one's plans and protect the family's privileges.

Expeditions in Davokar

IT HAS BEEN said before, but bears repeating time and time again: Davokar is a forest like no other. Traveling through an ordinary forest can be dangerous, arduous, and fraught with unpleasant surprises, but in Davokar the threats are greater, the challenges tougher, and the surprises far more deadly. And the further into the forest you go, the more dangerous it becomes – while travelers near the edge of Davokar may encounter a flock of mare cats, those venturing deeper into the woods will more likely face a horde of skullbiters or a famished arch troll.

THIS CHAPTER COVERS aspects of any journey into the legendary Davokar, to various depths and for different purposes. The aim is to answer three key issues: why travelers expose themselves to the dangers of the forest, how good preparations can improve their chance of survival, and what they may encounter on their journeys. Should your gaming group want to explore other regions than Davokar, you will have to make some changes and probably adjust certain details. But in principal, these guidelines can be used to handle all types of wilderness expeditions.

It should be noted that the rules below can be seen as an extension of the mechanics described in the product Treasure Hunts in Davokar, which is included in *Adventure Pack 1*. They are aimed at really far-reaching expeditions, with the intent of making them more varied, interesting and (if so desired) random.

Missions

TO THOSE WHO have already made plenty of money and who live in a world where everything seems to have been explored and mapped, it may seem like madness to willingly expose oneself to the dangers of Davokar. But the people of Ambria see the forest in a very different light. For some the expeditions into the

Goal-oriented Play

This chapter on expeditions in Davokar works very well with many of the concepts for goal-oriented roleplaying presented in Section I – especially Staging an Expedition (page 57) and Holy Mission (page 51).

Many expeditions have ventured into Davokar. Few are those that have returned...

forest are a last desperate alternative to starvation and misery, for others a deliberate gamble with potential gains matching the extreme risk. Still others are driven by ambition, curiosity or the pursuit of power and glory – urges that can partly be satisfied in other ways, but not as quickly and effectively.

Davokar is arguably one of the *Symbaroum* game's main characters, meant to be the setting for many of the adventures taking place around the gaming table. Hence, it must offer a certain degree of variation, aside from the character progression that comes from accumulating experience and being able to press deeper and deeper into the darkness. Looking for ancient Symbarian ruins is certainly exciting, but after a dozen treasure hunts even the most adventurous player would probably be yearning for something else.

TREASURE HUNT

The first and most obvious reason to head out into the murky woods is to look for ruins from the time of Symbaroum, in the hope that they will be brimming with riches. Information about promising treasure grounds can be obtained in many ways – in settlements near the edge of the forest, goblin villages, barbarian camp sites, or by studying legends and other remnants of ancient times.

Treasure hunts usually begin in civilized areas, where the player characters come across information about a ruin or are offered the chance to join someone else's expedition. The journey can be more or less challenging depending on how far into the forest the characters are going, and whether any intrigues/conflicts arise between the expedition members – treacherous companions are a problem that should never be underestimated! As for the ruin and its treasures, they can either be generated randomly or designed beforehand; either way, in the long run, it will probably be more interesting to vary the amount of treasure, so that the player characters will sometimes hit the jackpot and sometimes return with nothing after wasting a great deal of resources.

The challenges facing the player characters should reflect that they are not alone in the game world. Sure, confrontations with monsters and dragouls can make for thrilling encounters, but do not forget to include other types of encounters as well: another treasure hunting expedition may already be on the scene; the ruin may be home to a peaceful goblin tribe or be watched by the Iron Pact; or perhaps it turns out to be inhabited by a handful of stray ogres trying to build a decent life for themselves.

EXPLORATION

Every so often, organizations like the Royal Sekretorium and Ordo Magica will arrange expeditions into Davokar. The purpose for this can be to learn more about some historical event, identify or gather medicinal herbs, find manuscripts describing forgotten rituals, or seek out "proof" that House Kohinoor or some other noble house has a historical claim to a certain territory.

Player characters who are members of a faction or organization can of course go exploring on their own initiative, perhaps after finding clues in an archive or talking to some of Davokar's inhabitants. But since nobles and scholars tend to abhor physical labor, the player characters are just as likely to be hired to do someone else's grunt work. Again, the player characters should sometimes return empty-handed (to an aggravated employer) and sometimes with whatever they were supposed to retrieve. Maybe they will find some other even more important piece of information, which raises the question of how much they should withhold from the person financing the expedition (which could lead to complications if he or she has a mole among the player characters' companions)?

A group of explorers will probably face the same kind of challenging encounters as treasure hunters. But in this case a ruin's inhabitants can also be used as sources of information. A cryptwalker might provide deeper knowledge about the significance of a mural painting, while a goblin tribe can tell the characters about a previous expedition that recently discovered a cache of rune-marked copper tablets.

MISSIONARY WORK

Followers of both the Lawgiver and the Lifegiver see it as their duty to spread the knowledge of, and the love for, Prios among pagans and heretics. The target could be a goblin tribe, a barbarian campsite, or why not a free settlement that has come up with a unique version of Prios worship (see page 51 for further ideas).

A player character may feel compelled to serve the Sun God due to personal convictions or pressure from his/her superiors, but it is more likely that a certain congregation or an individual priest is in need of an armed escort who knows the forest. Whatever the case, the group in question could be receptive to the message, or outright hostile to "outsiders." Perhaps they feign interest in order to disarm and enslave the missionaries, or worse. Or they may demand that the player characters prove "Prios' greatness" by passing some brutal test or defeating some fearsome creature that has long plagued the group.

Most challenges during missionary tours will probably be social in nature – conflicts between missionaries and locals, between various groups on site, and between the locals and their wider community (such as a clan or tribe).

MANHUNT

Another common type of mission in Davokar is to find and bring back missing individuals or groups. The previous headings can be used as a starting point to determine who has gone missing, and why – a group of plunderers, explorers or missionaries. These could also be humans wishing to join the Iron Pact or some who willingly have moved away from Ambria, attracted to the idea of becoming a free settler, hermit or member of some barbarian clan.

In this case, suitable quest givers include family members, employers and friends. But one must be careful; the missing person does not always want to be found, and might avoid or hide from the player characters. In more complicated cases, the person/people in question might no longer be where they should be; they might have been abducted or willingly followed new information to somewhere completely different. This is another type of mission where the player characters should sometimes return empty-handed, due to the person being dead or simply impossible to find.

In addition to the challenges that characterize treasure hunting, exploring and missionary missions, manhunts can require a high degree of problem solving. The characters could have to track the individual across great distances, sneak into hostile settlements, and use their powers and rituals in clever ways.

Movement in Davokar

DIVIDING A FOREST like Davokar into a few homogeneous zones is of course impossible, but for descriptive purposes we are forced to resort to certain simplifications. In order to make the account a little more varied compared to the *Core Rulebook*, the description below distinguishes between three types of areas: Bright, Wild and Dark Davokar (see map on page 91).

When moving through the forest, the table Way of Travel & Time on page 184 in the *Core Rulebook* is still used, here repeated with the addition that Wild Davokar has the same stats as Bright Davokar.

Table 24: Way of Travel & Time

WAY OF TRAVEL*	PLAINS OF AMBRIA	BRIGHT/WILD DAVOKAR	DARK DAVOKAR
Day's march	20 km	20 km	10 km
Forced march**	40 km	30 km	15 km
Death march***	60 km	40 km	20 km
Day's ride	40 km	30 km	10 km
Forced ride**	60 km	45 km	15 km
Death ride**	70 km	50 km	20 km

* Journeys along or on the rivers count as one level lower; for instance, moving along a river in Bright Davokar counts as a journey on the Plains of Ambria.
** Forced march/ride means that no natural healing will occur while traveling
*** ADeath march/ride involves an actual risk for one's life and well-being. All who travel at this speed suffer at least 1 point of *Toughness* each day, and must make a *Strong* test in order to not suffer an additional 1D6 points of damage. A roll with the outcome 20 means that the traveler has been mortally injured in an accident during the journey.

We also suggest that traveling up or down a river counts as one tier lower, so that a trip along the river Eanor in Bright or Wild Davokar is equivalent to a journey across the plains of Ambria.

Other things affecting the characters' travels are their access to a competent guide and the acquisition and storage of supplies. Below we present a set of guidelines for just that, including a list of Misfortunes that travelers might face if they or their guide are having a bad day. Some gaming groups may find these rules unnecessarily detailed, in which case the solution is the same as always: use whatever seems interesting and ignore the rest.

Starvation, optional rule

For people traveling through Davokar, running out of food is as serious a threat as predators and corrupted nature. After five days without any food whatsoever, or ten days on rations, the following effects kick in:

The player character...
... does not benefit from any natural healing
... has two chances to fail all success tests
... can only move at half speed
... must pass a *Strong* test every day; failure decreases *Strong* by –1. *Strong* 0 means death by starvation

If this rule is combined with the guidelines for Sleep Deprivation (page 78 in *Yndaros – The Darkest Star*), the effects are added together, which among other things means that the player character has three chances to fail all success tests.

SUPPLIES

These guidelines assume that the player characters can find fresh/untainted water every day. Food, however, must be brought along, preferably enough so that they will not have to spend time and energy hunting or picking berries and mushrooms. This raises the question of how much in the way of gear and supplies the characters can carry, on their own or with the help of carriers and pack animals.

Provisions

Regarding provisions, the gaming group has an important choice to make: do you want the food situation to be a challenge, or ignore all that and settle for the dangers that await in the forest and at your destination? In the latter case, the player characters can simply purchase enough food to get them there and back again, in the form of waybread and/or edibles that have been smoked, dried, salted or preserved in some other way – then they just have to keep track of how many days go by and adjust their food supply accordingly.

But for the players and their characters to get a feel for what traveling in Davokar is really like, we recommend the Game Master employ starvation as a very real threat, in which case purchasing, storing and transporting provisions becomes much more important. The characters should also find themselves a capable guide that can help them prevent Misfortunes, such as bolting pack animals, reluctant carriers and spoiled provisions.

If the characters are running out of food, the guide can help replenish their stock, and if that is not enough there are of course other options as well. The player characters could seek out and negotiate with local barbarian villages, goblin tribes or free settlements, and maybe even venture a nerve-racking meeting with elves or trolls. Yet another option is to raid the stores of another expedition, if they are fortunate enough to come across one.

But even so, they can find themselves on the brink of starvation. In that case there are rules for Starvation in the text box to the left.

Encumbrance

Another factor that can make traveling through the forest a more vivid experience is the guidelines for Encumbrance on page 100 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*. To avoid making this more complicated than it needs to be, we suggest the following rules for woodland travelers:

- One waybread is enough to feed one person for seven days, and counts as one (1) item against the encumbrance limit.

MAP COVERING
Ambria AND THE FOREST OF Davokar
DRAWN BY CARTOGRAPHER
TAREO GRANEPLUMÉ
0 20 40 60 80 100 KM
N
NE
E
SE
S
SW
NW
W
GAOIA
SAAR-KAHN
ENGAI
DAVOKAR
GODINIA
YEDESA
THE RAVENS
VARAKKO
Jerak's Sinkhole
BAIAGA
BLACK PITCH MIRE
The Ruin City of Odaban
VAJVOD
Serand's Pyramid
Sun Temple
The Columns of Haganor
ZAREK
ODAIOVA
MALGOMOR
Sevona
VOLGOMA
Karvosti
Earth Towers of the Black Leech Rift
KAROHAR
Karo's Fen
THE MARSHES
Melima
Jakaar
EANOR
NEW BERETOR
Thistle Hold
Rastor
NEW BERENDORIA
Kurun
NARUGOR
Templewall
Ravenia
PRIOS DOMAIN
SERAGON
KASANDRIEN
Agrella
YNDAROS
DOUDRAN
MERVIDUN
Redina
VELOMA
YNDARIEN
VOORA
Merigil
Kuam Zamok
Dark Davokar
Wild Davokar
Bright Davokar

Effect of Boons

The boons *Cartographer* and *Pathfinder* would probably be useful in relation to the Orientation test. *Pathfinder* then grants the guide two chances to succeed, while *Cartographer* can add a bonus of up to +3 to the roll.

- Other provisions are enough for one day per ration, and count as half an item against the encumbrance limit.
- Capable carriers (goblin or human) cost 1 shilling per day and can carry up to 40 units, unless they are expected to contribute in other ways (*Strong* 13 and the *Pack-mule* boon). Note that these will need their share of the food supply.
- Four-legged pack animals (horse, donkey, mule) can carry twice as much, i.e. 80 units each. The cost of such animals is specified in the *Core Rulebook* (page 154–155), and they have the advantage of being able to survive exclusively by grazing.

The expedition's encumbrance limit will also be important on the journey home, when the player characters will want to bring their finds back to civilization.

WILDERNESS GUIDE

Venturing into uncharted wilderness is always risky business. Book learning and a high *Vigilant* value is not enough to secure provisions and avoid danger; no, it takes special knowledge about the specific environment. This is why many treasure hunting parties and expeditions always have a skilled guide or two with them. Also, this explains why the rules of the trait/boon *Bushcraft* have been changed and expanded, according to the text box below.

The guide has two main functions: replenishing the food/water supply according to the rules for *Bushcraft*, and helping the expedition avoid the worst hazards of the journey. In order to be truly useful, the guide must know *Bushcraft* at whatever level the local environment requires; in Davokar's case: level I for Bright, level II for Wild, and level III for Dark territories.

The cost of the guide is determined by its *Vigilant* value and its level of *Bushcraft*. The base cost is one thaler per week, but for every point of *Vigilant* past 11 and every level of *Bushcraft* past I, the cost increases by one thaler. For example, hiring a guide with *Vigilant* 13 that can be useful in Wild Davokar (*Bushcraft* II) costs 4 thaler a week.

ORIENTATION & MISFORTUNES

Each day of travel through a wilderness area, the guide must roll an Orientation test against *Vigilant* with the *Bushcraft* trait/boon. If successful, this confers an advantage when rolling on some of the tables described in the section Events (see page 97).

If the test fails, the party gains no advantages and suffers a more or less terrible Misfortune. Below is a list of incidents with the potential to cause trouble for the travelers, or at least treat them to unwanted surprises. The Game Master can ask one of the players to roll 1D20, modified by +5 if the expedition is in Wild Davokar or +10 if they have reached the Dark, and then look up the Misfortune with the number corresponding to the dice outcome. The incidents are described in short, but often with questions which the Game Master can build on, possibly together with the players.

Furthermore, when it comes to avoiding Misfortunes, the person guiding the group can make success tests even in regions that require a higher level of the trait/boon than he or she possesses. It takes at least *Bushcraft* (I) to be allowed an attempt, and the test is made with a –3 modification if the environment requires one level higher, or –5 if the guide has level I and the environment requires level III. If such a test succeeds, the group suffers no Misfortune, but also does not gain any of the normal advantages for making a successful Orientation test.

1. The Camp Site

The characters find an abandoned camp site. Is it truly abandoned? Is there any valuable equipment left behind, or something dangerous?

2. The Corpse

The characters come across the remains of a dead fortune-hunter who was not prepared for the challenges of Davokar. What killed her? Do the characters recognize the deceased?

Bushcraft, boon (expanded)

The person can read the signs of the wilds, knows what areas to avoid and is used to finding food, water and shelter in harsh environments. While moving through ruins or wilderness, the person can pass a *Vigilant* test to gather 1D6 rations of food and water per day, or 1D10 rations if that is the person's sole focus (no movement).

Bushcraft can be acquired multiple times, in which case it can be used in increasingly hostile environments. For example, level I is useful in places such as Bright Davokar and the outskirts of the mountains; level II in Wild Davokar and the deep mountain valleys; level III in Dark Davokar and the Underworld (the Game Master decides). Note that one must have spent a significant period of time in the more demanding environments to benefit from the higher levels of the boon.

3. A Distant Howl
An inhuman howl is heard way out in the woods; soon thereafter it is heard again, closer this time. How do the members of the expedition react?

4. A Bad Omen
The characters encounter signs indicating a clear and present danger. What kind of signs – footprints, cadavers, mucus, blood? And how fresh are they?

5. Sudden silence
Suddenly the forest holds its breath and a tense silence falls over the expedition. Why?

6. Stuck
One of the expedition's carts or part of their equipment gets stuck, in mud, in a crack or under a falling giant tree. It takes two people, each of them rolling a test against *Strong*, to remedy the situation. If one of the tests fails, the company will travel ten kilometers shorter this day; if both tests fail, it takes a whole day before they can continue forth.

7. Shadowed
The expedition is being followed, which can be noticed with a test against *Vigilant*. Who is spying on them, and with what intent?

8. Thorns
The expedition stops at the edge of a vast field of dense thorn bushes. They can go around, thereby cutting the day's traveling distance in half. If they try to force their way through, all members must roll two tests against *Discreet* – each failure deals 1D4 damage (ignoring *Armor*).

9. The Patrol
A unit from the Queen's Rangers orders the expedition to halt. They rummage through packs and other bags and demand to see the group's Explorer's License. Are they really rangers of the Queen? If yes, are they corrupt?

10. Mosquito swarm
During the day's walk, the characters are harassed by a swarm of mosquitos. What they don't know is that the insects are exposing them to a disease. See rules on Disease in Symbaroum (page 169 in the *Monster Codex*) and roll 1D6 – 1–3 Weak Disease; 4–5 Moderate Disease; 6 Strong Disease.

11. Downpour
A strange, icy rain hammers down on the forest and the expedition is soaked. The characters can choose to test *Strong* or *Resolute*; a failure means that the person catches a chill and suffers –3 to all success tests until he or she gets warm by sitting close to a fire.

12. Lost
The characters have to admit that they have lost their bearings. As usual, the guide rolls one Orientation test per day, but with a –5 modification. If failed, the group wanders in circles and makes no progress at all; if successful, they progress at normal speed. It takes three successful tests with a –5 modification before they escape the bewildering area and hence are free from the negative modification. What makes the terrain so difficult to navigate?

13. Sick Animals
The animals of the expedition seem exhausted and throw up all they eat. A character with *Beast Lore* can help them by successfully rolling a *Cunning* test – one test per day and animal. If the company travels with one or more sick animals, they only move a quarter of the normal distance. Maybe they have to leave some animals behind?

14. Marshland
Suddenly, the characters reach a vast marshland which will take half a day to circumvent. If they choose to proceed, the guide must roll a *Vigilant* test; if failed, a random expedition member starts to sink and one of the others must pass two *Strong* tests to save him or her. If three tests fail before two successes are rolled, the unlucky one disappears into the muck.

15. Ambush
Hostiles in the area are planning to ambush the characters, which may be noted with a *[Vigilant –5]* test. Who is the enemy and what is its goal?

16. Spoiling Food
The characters discover that something has consumed some of their supplies while they were sleeping or traveling, or the provisions are attacked by aggressive microbes which cause part of the stock to rot. The expedition loses 1D20 rations.

17. Wildfire
Without warning, a wildfire spreads toward the expedition at an alarming rate. Each person must pass two *Quick* tests to reach a safe location. Anyone who fails one or more tests takes 1D4 damage for 1D4 turns (ignoring *Armor*) before getting to safety; note that they cannot stop and try to extinguish the flames before then. What happens to the pack animals and/or the contracted carriers?

Dehydration

A living creature cannot survive long without water. After three days the character must pass a *Strong* test; failure means death. If successful, the character must remain completely still in the shade in order to survive, for a maximum of five days (a new *Strong* test is made every day).

Player Character as a Guide

It is of course possible for a player character to act as the group's wilderness guide, as long as that person has *Bushcraft* (ideally at the required level) and is fairly *Vigilant*. The term guide simply refers to the person leading the party on their journey, whether he or she is an independent contractor or a full member of the party.

Unreliable guides

Not all guides can be trusted. If the Game Master so desires, one of the player characters must pass a *Persuasive* test after each random enemy encounter on the journey, in order for the guide to stay with the expedition. Furthermore, if the outcome is 20, it turns out that the guide belongs to a group of robbers who come to take the player characters' money and treasure. They outnumber the player characters by 1 and have the stats of a Robber/Robber Chief (see page 211 in the *Core Rulebook*).

18. From Bad to Worse
Roll two times on this table and use both outcomes.

19. Discord in the Ranks
The strenuous journey is starting to get on peoples' nerves. Two non-player characters in the expedition start fighting violently. What has happened? Is one of them infected by something?

20. Sacred Ground
The ground that the characters are traversing is considered taboo for strangers by the local population – the trespassers must die! Who lives in the area? Why the taboo?

21. Corrupted Soil
The environment suddenly feels twisted and sick; soon it can be seen, on the dark veins and black leaves of the vegetation. The area is blight-stricken; the characters can turn back and choose another way (loses one day), or they can proceed and roll a *Strong* test each – a failure means they suffer 1D6 points of temporary corruption that do not leave the body until they have left the corrupted area behind.

22. Hangman's Hill
Without warning you see them hanging there, in nooses from the lower branches, gutted and mutilated: the members of a large expedition. The characters' companions must be persuaded *[Persuasive←Resolute]* not to turn around and leave. Who has done this, and why?

23. Sabotage
During the night, a lone saboteur tries to access the expedition's members, provisions and/or animals. Who is the saboteur? What is the target? Can the characters thwart the attempt?

24. The Ironsworn's Ultimatum
They appear as if from out of the very air, along the path where the characters are walking – an Iron Pact warband, arrows pointing at the travelers. The leader of the elves gives an ultimatum: turn around and take a long detour (two days) or face the Ironsworn's wrath. Why? Can an agreement be reached, such as being blindfolded and escorted through the area?

25. Lair of Evil
Something in this region attracts aggressive monsters and adversaries – roll an extra time on Table 28: Enemies in Davokar (page 99). What is attracting these creatures to the area?

26. Delirium
The characters start hearing and seeing what isn't there; horrifying figures connected to their own history. If a character openly questions what he or she sees and hears, they can roll a *[Resolute –3]* test; success means that the hallucinations subside. The Game Master decides how much time passes before the group can resume the journey. Is the delirium caused by something they have eaten, or by something in the air or water?

27. The Eternal Contagion
Everything in the area is dead or twisted beyond recognition. This place is horribly corrupt; even if the characters decide to turn back and go around (losing one day), they must pass a *Strong* test or suffer one point of permanent corruption. If proceeding and failing the *Strong* test, they suffer 1D4 points of permanent corruption; should the test succeed, they are instead plagued by 1D6 temporary corruption that lingers all day. In both cases, all provisions are automatically infected – each ration consumed deals one point of temporary corruption that does not go away until the afflicted has eaten pure food for a week.

28. Disappearance
An expedition member (character, companion or animal with supplies) suddenly disappears, as if evaporated into nothing. Was it transferred to another place, time or world? Who or what caused the disappearance, and why?

29. Heart of Darkness
A member of the expedition encounters something that makes him or her crazy (bug bite, spores, foul air or similar). Select a non-player or player character at random, who then must roll a *Resolute* test: the character suffers 1D4 permanent corruption if the test is successful, or 1D10 if it fails. Irrespective of which, the victim will attack the closest person with the intent of killing him or her – a state that remains for the duration of the scene.

30. The Eye of the Forest
All who travel the area feel as if they are being watched by the forest itself, as if it is assessing them, searching for weaknesses. Suddenly the feeling grows many times stronger, becomes threatening, like the whole world is out to get them. All who fail a *[Resolute –5]* test are struck by panic and start fleeing in different directions. The panic persists for 1D4 hours, and during that time the expedition members become scattered, alone in the depths of Davokar...

Planning the Expedition

ENDURING A JOURNEY to the depths of Davokar requires both luck and skill; to actually make it back home poses even higher demands, especially regarding planning and preparations. This section deals with how you as a Game Master can turn the expedition's prelude into one or more exciting game sessions.

An important component in this is to convey the understanding that the player characters' lives literally may depend on how well they prepare for the journey. At taverns and inns along the forest's southern border, they can find several (more or less physically and mentally scarred) fortune hunters who have journeyed into the darkness and can stress the importance of mapping one's route, securing a skilled guide (preferably two, in case one of them should die), purchasing high-quality provisions, and so on.

Described under the headings below are not only the sources of information and available companions, but also how the characters' choices will technically affect their journey through Davokar. A high-quality resource can add bonuses to certain tests, or grant re-rolls when so desired.

MAP

When the player characters have decided on a route to the targeted site, they can try to learn more about it – specific areas to avoid, dangers to look out for, and places that are relatively safe or can offer various forms of resources.

Such information can be obtained from people as well as from written sources. As far as the former is concerned, it is for instance possible to seek help from experienced fortune-hunters, Ordo Magica's explorers or persons who have actually lived in the areas the characters will pass on their journey. Archives to scour for additional intelligence can be found in several places in towns like Thistle Hold and Ravenia.

Information from People

How much help they gain from conversations with individuals claiming to have information about their route simply depends on how much they are willing to pay. Trusting the misleading information offered by ordinary treasure hunters (cost: 1–9 thaler) will even have negative effects during their travels through Davokar. Technically, their leader/guide gets a –1 penalty to orientation tests and +1 to rolls on tables 28 (Enemies) and 29 (Terrain).

Should they instead make the effort to search for experienced forest travelers, they can actually get some help, in which case they get a +1 modifier to the orientation test and a –1 modifier to rolls on said tables. But the question is how deep into the forest the person has ventured. An experienced treasure hunter will demand 25 thaler (20 with a successful *Persuasive* test), but the information will only be useful while traveling through Bright Davokar (see the map on page 91). Sources like Ordo Magica can also provide information on Wild Davokar, at a price of 50 thaler (40 with a successful *[Persuasive –5]* test).

Finally, there are a few people whose information can give the characters a bonus to said test also in Dark Davokar, as for instance Lasifor Nightpitch and Lysindra Goldengrasp in Thistle Hold. These will charge 100 thaler for such detailed information, or 5% in future shares – can be haggled down to 80 thaler/4% with a successful *[Persuasive –1]* test.

Written Sources

Finding reliable information in the messy archives of Ambria takes time, even with the paid assistance of the notaries. Normally it costs 1 thaler a day and grants access to the archives, and another ten thaler a day for personal assistance (which adds +1 to tests for Research in Archives, page 100 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*).

Each participating player character makes one success test for every full day of research, up to a maximum of three successes.

The first success adds a +1 modification to Orientation tests, and –1 to rolls on tables 28 (Enemies) and 29 (Terrain), or –2 if the roll succeeds with a modification of 5 or more, but only in Bright Davokar.

Expensive Licenses

Acquiring an Explorer's License for journeys in Davokar is simply a must, and an expensive one at that. On page 34 in the *Core Rulebook* there is a table which can help you calculate the price, and remember that the licensors are rarely restrictive when it comes to increasing the base rate with extra add-on costs.

Characters who have difficulties raising that kind of money have a few painful options to choose from: selling properties, artifacts or other assets; borrowing the missing sum at high interest rates; or offering to sell future shares in their expedition. Given the level of risk, the interest rate should be 25% per month (20% with a successful *Persuasive* test), and persons who are offered future shares should demand 10% for every hundred thaler they invest, i.e. 50% for a loan of 500 thaler (more than that will be next to impossible to lend against future shares).

An additional test must succeed in order to gain matching modifications during the route through Wild Davokar, and yet another one for the journey through the darkest of the dark. In the latter case, the modifier can never exceed –1 for the tables.

GUIDE

General rules and guidelines for wilderness guides are found on page 92, but to actually acquire a competent guide is often a challenge, most often of a social nature. It can be that almost all suitable candidates are already out on expeditions, or recently returned and hence reluctant to go out again so soon. Or they may be bound by some form of contract, prepared to head out together with a group funded and led by some organization or individual.

In the latter case, and in part when it comes to convincing a recently returned wildlife expert, the player character needs to pressure the candidate to change his or her plans, preferably without their current employer realizing what is going on. Here are some suggested means of exerting pressure:

- Sabotaging the guide's current plans, for example by eliminating expedition members or destroying supplies.
- Negotiating better terms, promising the guide more money or even future shares.
- Digging up some secret that gives them leverage over the guide, for example that the person in question has stolen from or actively worked against former employers.
- Convincing the person that the player characters' expedition has a greater chance of success or even survival.
- Asking for written evidence that some dignitary will act as the expedition's protector; in Thistle Hold, for example, it can be Mayor Nightpitch, Chapter Master Cornelio, Father Elfeno or Lysindra Goldengrasp

Note that a group which has already contracted any guide stolen by the player characters will not exactly be overjoyed with this. If the gaming group is using the rules for scheming (see page 82), all characters should get a –2 modifier to their relations with that faction. Otherwise the Game Master can simply try to keep it in mind and let it come back to bite them when the groups meet in the forest.

Table 25 lists a handful of guides to choose from or use as inspiration when creating your own wilderness experts. Should additional stats and characteristics be needed, the Game Master can use those described on page 132 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*.

OTHER COMPANIONS

Maybe the player characters should consider hiring additional experts for their expedition, to fill in their own knowledge gaps or strengthen the group in other ways. Described below are a handful of professionals whose skills might be useful on the journey; the Game Master is free to give them names, appearances and personalities based on what kind of people the characters are looking for.

We propose that the player characters be allowed to decide exactly what their companions are capable of and how experienced they are, by creating them as independent characters with their own character sheets. These non-player characters should then be distributed between the players and become additional player characters over the course of the journey, in situations where their expertise can be of use.

The number of creation points that can be used to acquire abilities, boons, equipment and such for each companion is determined by how many future shares the player characters are willing to give up: the non-player character gets 50 creation points for every other percentage the player characters have promised him/her, to a maximum of 5% (that is, 150 points).

Should this procedure be too burdensome for the gaming group's liking, there is a vast array of characters described on page 122–139 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*. Certain adjustments will likely have

Table 25: Wilderness Guides

NAME	BUSHCRAFT LEVEL	VIGILANT	DESCRIPTION
Fonsiul	III	15	Famous goblin with a temper; already contracted by Ordo Magica
Arval	III	13	Timid youngster from Clan Baiaga; already contracted as a reserve by the Sun Church
Crooky	III	11	Stoop-shouldered ogre with a sense of humor; is planning her own expedition to another destination
Vindel	II	15	Elderly Ambrian, retired from the Queen's Rangers; newly returned, lightly wounded and in a terrible mood
Hygla	II	13	Scarred, love-struck goblin; also pregnant and therefore reluctant to embark on longer journeys

to be made, but at least there are stats to build on for most of the types below.

Monster Hunter
The Monster Hunter profession is described on page 15 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*, where appropriate traits, abilities and boons are also specified. Aside from participating in regular combat, the monster hunter's knowledge about beasts or abominations (the *Beast Lore* ability) can give the entire gaming group a much-needed damage bonus in times of peril.

Priest/Theurg
Priests can have different areas of expertise, but for a journey through Davokar, their healing or holy powers may be of particular interest. Furthermore, a combat-oriented priest can be an effective abomination slayer, with powers such as *Holy Aura*, *Witch Hammer* and *Blessed Shield*.

Interpreter
There are highly educated individuals who specialize in interpreting between the peoples of the region, and who have the ability to express themselves in the otherwise extinct Symbarian language.

In the company of an experienced interpreter with *Loremaster* (novice), the player characters can communicate in foreign human languages (for example the barbarian tongue) without passing any *Cunning* tests; at adept level the same applies to the languages of elves and trolls, and a master has the same effect on conversations in Symbarian. The strong linguistic ability also gives the player characters +5 to *Persuasive* when negotiating to avoid combat, if the Game Master deems it at all possible.

Finally, the gaming group can benefit from having someone with whom their own loremaster can discuss and analyze finds, artifacts, ancient texts, and the like. Technically, this means that the player characters have two chances to pass all success tests related to *Loremaster*, as long as the level required does not exceed that of the freelance interpreter.

Sellsword
In Ambria there are plenty of battle-hardened veterans and well-trained youngsters seeking work as freelance warriors. In this case, the players are free to create their companions any way they like in order to bolster their own weaknesses. Perhaps they need a warrior on the front line, capable of soaking up lots of damage? Or maybe they are in need of a ranger who is a skilled marksman as well as a competent tracker?

Ritualist
Rituals are among the most powerful means of problem solving this game has to offer, and unless the characters are very broad in their mystical training, there will likely be a knowledge gap or two that needs filling. There are rituals for tracking and finding, protecting and concealing, but also for communicating with animals and spirits – all of them very useful for expeditions trying to reach deep into Davokar.

Witch
Witches are partly covered by the category above, but deserve their own mention. Their ability to lull Davokar's darkness and abominations to sleep can help the player characters escape many life-threatening situations, and the power they wield over weather and wind may also be of great help. Furthermore, their ability to *Shapeshift* or *Borrow Beast* can be useful for reconnaissance purposes.

Companions and Death Tests

Even if the player characters are to use their companions as additional player characters, we recommend that they be fundamentally handled as non-player characters. This would mean that they cannot make Death Tests, but will die once their *Toughness* reaches 0.

Events

Traveling through a wild and unexplored environment offers opportunities as well as risks. This section contains rules for randomly determining what the player characters encounter or experience on their expeditions. The Game Master may of course pick and choose among the lists and tables below, without rolling dice, if that corresponds to your preferred style of play, possibly after talking this over with your players.

Each day the characters spend in Davokar, four things can happen: they can come across a ruin, an encounter, a group of enemies, and/or special terrain. Since the forest of Davokar is so vast and diverse in its environment, a separate roll is made for each of these four, with the following general modifications:

- When in Wild Davokar, add +2 to rolls on tables 26 to 29.
- When in Dark Davokar, add +5 to rolls on tables 26 to 29.
- When traveling along waterways, add +2 to any roll on Table 28.

We suggest that these four rolls are made before the gaming session begins, so the Game Master will have time to consider what the outcomes entail and turn them into an interesting scene with suitable challenges.

If the outcome of the rolls means that the player characters encounter a *medium-sized, badly damaged ruin and PC number of Weak enemies with an Ordinary*

Finding ruins with Cunning

A person who is looking for a specific ruin and has the *Loremaster* ability can research the place in an archive before heading out. The process takes one week and costs 10+1D6 thaler in various fees and bribes. Once the group has arrived in the area where the ruin should be, the player character makes a *Cunning* test to actually find it; if the test fails, a new attempt can be made the following day. Note that the excavation is carried out as usual.

Active Search

As an optional rule, the Game Master can decide that the characters' chance of encountering a ruin is affected by whether or not they are actively searching for one – if so, active search requires that they do not move faster than normal speed. Groups that opt not to actively search gain no bonus from passed Orientation tests and also suffer a –5 modification when rolling on Table 26.

leader, the ruin in question would likely be a den of robbers or the home of an aggressive goblin tribe.

Should it also turn out that there is a *local settlement* in the area (see Table 27), it may be inhabited by other goblins or human settlers who are either in conflict with the occupants of the ruin or working together with them in some way.

Table 38 on page 106 can be used or consulted when the outcome indicates that the characters face both an encounter and a group of enemies, to determine the relations between the two parties. Otherwise, feel free to let your imagination run wild!

RUIN

For each day of travel, the expedition leader makes a roll on Table 26: Ruins in Davokar. A successful Orientation test grants a bonus of +2, in addition to any other modifications.

The table determines whether the party finds a ruin and, if so, what type of ruin it is – in turn determining the maximum number of finds at that location. It is up to the Game Master to decide on the physical characteristics of the ruin, possibly with help from the guidelines introduced in the upcoming chapter.

Simply discovering a ruin rich with treasure is no guarantee of wealth and fame – the items in question must first be found or dug up! Everyone contributing to the excavation makes a *Vigilant* test every day. Successful diggers may roll on Table 30: Type of Item on page 100 to see what kind of treasure they have found, after which they are referred to another table to determine exactly what it is.

The excavation may continue until the ruin's maximum number of finds have been salvaged – a roll that can be made in secret by the Game Master or left to the players. But staying in the same place for several days is not without risks, as shown under the Enemies heading below.

Table 26: Ruins in Davokar

1D20 +MOD.	RUIN	MAXIMUM # OF FINDS
1–7	None	–
8–10	Completely crumbled or already ransacked	–
11–12	Small, badly damaged	1D4+2
13–14	Small, dilapidated	1D6+2
15–16	Small, well-preserved	1D8+2
17–18	Medium, badly damaged	2D6+2
19	Medium, dilapidated	2D8+2
20	Medium, well-preserved	2D10+2
21	Grand, badly damaged	3D8+2
22	Grand, dilapidated	3D10+2
23+	Grand, well-preserved	3D12+2

ENCOUNTERS

Although unusual, it is not impossible to come across groups of potentially peaceful travelers in Davokar. Obviously, the likelihood of that happening decreases the further into the forest you get, particularly when it comes to encounters with humans from Ambria or the barbarian clans.

Once a day a roll is made on Table 27, modified by what part of the forest the characters are in. If the outcome indicates that an encounter will take place, and the guide of the expedition passed the Orientation test, the player character (or guide) with the highest *Vigilant* value can make a test modified by the value specified in the Modification For Detection column. If successful, the player characters notice the other group before being detected themselves, and may choose whether to hide, lay an ambush, or do something else; if the test fails (or if the Orientation test failed) the Game Master gets to decide the strategy of the other group.

The details regarding the encounter are decided by the Game Master, on the basis that the player characters and the group they face are equally keen to avoid bloodshed. Perhaps they can exchange information, help each other with healing and/or supplies, or join forces to defeat a mutual enemy in the area?

ENEMIES

In this case, the term "enemies" refers to creatures whose default position is aggression, whom the player characters cannot easily get past without combat. These may be predators, belligerent cultural beings, ravenous abominations or life-hating undead. Table 28 only specifies the enemy's resistance level, which leaves it to the Game Master to decide exactly what is attacking the player characters or standing in their way.

Each day a roll is made on Table 28, modified by what part of the forest they are in. A successful Orientation test adds a –1 modifier to the roll, or –2 if the test succeeds with a difference of 5 or more.

If the player characters choose to stay in the same place for more than one day, for example to gather supplies or excavate a ruin, they risk attracting unwanted attention. In that case the most *Discreet* member of the party can try to make sure that

Table 27: Encounters in Davokar

1D20 +MOD.	ENCOUNTER	NUMBER	MODIFICATION FOR DETECTION
1	Hunting party	1D6+2	±0
2	Missionaries	PC+1D6	+3
3	Treasure hunters	PC+1D6	+1
4	Local settlement	1D20+20	+5
5	Rangers	PC+2	±0
6	Large expedition	PC+1D6	+3
7	Nomadic goblins	1D20+20	–1
8	Diplomatic elves, Civilized trolls or Peaceful bestiaals	PC+1D10	–5
9 +	None	–	–

everyone is as quiet as possible, by rolling a daily *Discreet* test from their second day forward. A failure means a roll is made on Table 28 to determine what type of unexpected guests show up, without help from a successful Orientation test – staying in the same place for too long can be very dangerous indeed...

TERRAIN

Davokar may seem fairly predictable on a map, with clear lines drawn between its bright, wild and dark regions. But the forest is legendary for its treacherous nature, which anyone traveling under its foliage will quickly learn.

Once a day, a roll is made on Table 29, modified by what part of the forest they are in. A successful Orientation test adds a –1 modifier to the roll, or –2 if the test succeeded with a difference of 5 or more.

Table 28: Enemies in Davokar

1D20+ MOD.	ENCOUNTER	EXAMPLE
1–8	None	
9–10	PC number of Weak	Fortune Hunters, Jakaars, Frost Lights
11–12	PC number of Weak, with Ordinary leader	Robber chief + Robbers
13–14	PC number of Ordinary	Village Warriors, Kotkas, Blight-born Humans
15–16	PC number of Ordinary, with Challenging leader	Necromage + Dragouls
17–18	PC number of Challenging	Rage Trolls, Fer-bers, Killer Shrubs
19–20	PC number of Challenging, with Strong leader	Lindworm + Aboars
21–22	PC number of Strong	Hunger Wolves, Colossi, Stone Boars
23	PC number of Strong, with Mighty leader	Skullbiter Queen + Skullbiter Crus-hers
24	PC number of Mighty ene-mies, or PC×2 Strong	Ravenous Willow old crushers, Pri-mal Blight Beasts, Liege Trolls
25	PC number of Mighty enemies, with Legendary leader	The World Serpent + World Serpent wallowers

Table 29: Terrain in Davokar

1D20 MOD.	TERRAIN	EFFECT
1–10	Nothing special	
11–12	Easily traversable	The party covers 10 km more
13–14	Swamp/marsh	The party co-vers 5 km less
15–16	Sinkhole	Everyone tests *Vigilant*. Failure causes 1D8 falling damage
17–18	Poisonous spores	Everyone tests *Strong*. Failure causes 3 damage for 3 turns
19–20	Vengeful terrain	PC number of creatures, suiting the location
21	Slightly corrup-ted nature	One roll on Table 2 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 25)
22	Corrupted nature	Three rolls on Table 2 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 25)
23+	Severely corrup-ted nature	Five rolls on Table 2 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 25)

Legendary Resistance

Table 28 uses the levels of resistance presented in the *Core Rulebook* (page 173), but also something called Legendary resistance. You can read more about this in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* and on page 118 in this book, but it basically refers to unique monstrosities that are particularly difficult to defeat. Legendary creatures are always named individuals; there are no known examples of entire races whose every member can offer such overwhelming opposition.

The Treasure of the Ruins

PEOPLE CLAIMING THAT valuable remnants from past inhabitants of Davokar are simply lying around under the foliage, waiting to be found by ardent fortune hunters, have probably never set foot in the forest. No, it takes a great deal of effort and no small amount of luck to become the next Iasogoi Brigo or Elmea Rabbit's Foot!

The finds listed in the three tables below – Curiosities, Mystical Treasures and Artifacts – are things that can be found in the forest's more or less well-preserved ruins. Guidelines on how to handle the search and how many treasures can be found in a specific location are found under the Ruin heading (page 98), while this is where you determine exactly what items the player characters have uncovered.

Each person vigilant enough to find something starts by rolling on Table 30 to determine what type of item has been found. The outcome then points to one of three other tables, unless the find turns out to be debris. The Debris category covers items like cracked vases, damaged figurines and broken tools, which can be sold for 1D10 thaler in the markets of Ambria.

The Value of the Finds

The value of a find depends on several factors: what condition it is in, what the material is worth and how many potential buyers there are. A curiosity is worth 10+1D10 thaler. A Mystical treasure is worth 100+1D100 thaler. Artifacts are rarely traded in thaler, but if one finds a buyer the item can be sold for 1000+1D1000 thaler. Rolling 1D100 simply means that you roll 1D10 twice. The first roll determines the tens digit, and the second determines the ones digit. For example, if you roll a 3 followed by a 4, the outcome is 34. In order to roll 1D1000 you just add 1D10 for the thousands digit. The outcomes 00 and 000 equal 100 and 1000 respectively.

Table 30: Type of Item

BRIGHT	WILD	DARK	CATEGORY
1–5	1–4	1–2	Debris
6–15	5–13	3–11	Curiosity, Table 31
16–19	14–18	12–18	Mystical treasure, Table 32
20	19–20	19–20	Artifact, Table 33

Table 31: Curiosities

1D100	ITEM
1–2	Leather pouch containing stone marbles, fourteen shiny black ones and eight off-white, to play with or use as sling stones
3–4	Richly ornamented lyre of silver that can be fitted with new strings
5–6	Nail file with one rough side and one smooth, and a handle shaped like the silhouette of a wolf's head
7–8	Box containing twenty-four paper clips of patinated copper wire
9–10	Glass bottle containing a wooden model castle in a moorland landscape
11–12	Simple frying pan of rusted iron on which nothing ever sticks
13–14	Set of five bronze measuring cups, all in different sizes
15–16	Box containing thirty-six small, bone discs engraved with Symbarian cuneiform characters
17–18	Small basket woven out of miraculously living vines with healthy green leaves
19–20	Necklace made entirely from linked gold teeth
21–22	Silver brooch depicting a wraith owl, the rings around its eyes made from black, faceted stones
23–24	White-glazed and somewhat cracked porcelain plate, painted with the weathered motif of a straight-backed woman in a long dress, with a poleaxe resting against her shoulder
25–26	Comb made of lindworm bone with cuneiform characters on each tooth, which not only untangles one's hair but cleans away dirt and grease
27–28	Cracked ceramic serving platter, decorated with various types of fruit on a white background – two of the fruits are unfamiliar to present-day gardeners
29–30	Box in the shape of a rose with twenty-four golden petals in four rows, which must be unfolded in sequence to expose its empty interior
31–32	Silver fountain pen with golden details, which never seems to run out of ink
33–34	Bronze caliper, marked in cuneiform with an unknown unit of measurement
35–36	Flowerpot of dark blue ceramic, decorated with a white and red motif of daemonic couples in obscene positions

37–38	Copper box containing twelve ceramic figurines, each depicting the same goblin's head, but with different facial expressions
39–40	Patinated sheet of copper with cuneiform, listing the ingredients and procedure for brewing the alcoholic honey beverage Noid
41–42	Ornamented dagger with a dull steel blade that slides into the hilt when pressed against something
43–44	White-glazed porcelain mask that covers the upper part of one's face, shaped with an owl's beak, small branched horns, and red-lined eye openings
45–46	Wax stamp with a handle of pure gold whose mark represents the royal rune Labrys
47–48	Thick, cracked tallow candle which, when lit, emits a dark yellow smoke
49–50	Green, ceramic oil lamp with a shade of patterned glass that rotates while the lamp is lit
51–52	Brown, leather eyepatch with different-colored gemstones arranged in the form of an open eye
53–54	Model of a twin-masted stone ship; the stern can be opened to reveal sixteen tin figures spread across two decks
55–56	Black leather leash that connects to a collar of the same material, large enough to fit around a bull's neck and decorated with studs of pure gold
57–58	Badly damaged wooden box with moldy fabric inside; contains five well-preserved seeds which, if handled correctly (successful *Cunning* with *Alchemy*), can grow into cherry trees with multicolored flowers and delicious fruit
59–60	Long, thin wooden box full of flat copper pieces of different shapes, all of them badly patinated; a puzzle with two missing pieces; washing off the patina reveals the motif of a daemonic abomination
61–62	Spoon of black bone, carved with runes filled with red paint that has partially worn off; nothing one eats with the spoon is absorbed by the body
63–64	12×9 game board with different-sized squares of various colors/materials (white bone, black wood, and patinated copper), in a frame of patterned hardwood
65–66	The clappers and tubes of a wind chime made from melodious ettercopal
67–68	Fist-sized, irregular, glistening black stone with magnetic properties
69–70	Silver case with sixteen dried-up, multicolored pieces of chalk; they are unused and can be restored for drawing after successful alchemical treatment (*Cunning* test with *Alchemy*)
71–72	Carved bone statue of an andrik with a cracked beak, armed with a crossbow and a hatchet
73–74	Silver tuning fork in the key of D
75–76	Stiletto with a wavy blade of strange green metal; the hilt is shaped as a human child with clasped hands
77–78	Statuette of an ox chiseled in black stone; raising its tail tilts the horns
79–80	Blackened walking stick, patterned like the scales of a snake or fish, with a fist-sized pearl for a knob
81–82	Circular belt or cloak buckle made of silver, with gold details depicting three crossed arrows
83–84	Copper spyglass with rotating segments; aiming it at the sun reveals colorful patterns which change as one rotates the segments
85–86	Hourglass of misty white crystal contained within a blue-gray metal stand, whose sand runs exactly twice as fast in one direction as it does in the other
87–88	Silver watering can whose long spout has been broken off; decorated with motifs of grotesque birds
89–90	Stuffed and mystically preserved ferret that has undergone a Symbarian rite of exaltation – equipped with predatory jaws, long claws, a crown of horns, and sickly yellow eyes
91–92	Bone flute, as long as one's palm and as thin as a little finger; attracts 1D20 small birds if played by someone with the *Musician* boon
93–94	Shimmering pink pearl with streaks of red, the size of an eyeball, with the sweet-sour taste of berry compote; never loses size or flavor
95–96	The parts of a broken dreamcatcher that can be repaired (*Cunning* test with *Blacksmith*). Brings peace to the sleeping; those burdened by *Nightmares* have two chances to pass their *Resolute* test
97–98	A clay cruse stoppered with a wax-sealed cork, bearing a life-sustaining seal that has kept its contents fresh for hundreds of years – red wine of excellent quality from a particularly superb vintage
99–100	Statue of glossy, dark gray stone, as tall as a forearm, in the form of a daemon. The base bears a cuneiform inscription that can be interpreted by someone with *Loremaster* (master): "Jeberaja"

Misplaced

Maybe you'd say that these texts about the treasure of the ruins should have been placed in the book's third section instead, The Rewards? If so, you are completely right, but since this content is linked to the challenges involved in finding and excavating ruins, we believe that the confusion (and need to flip pages) is reduced by the chosen structure.

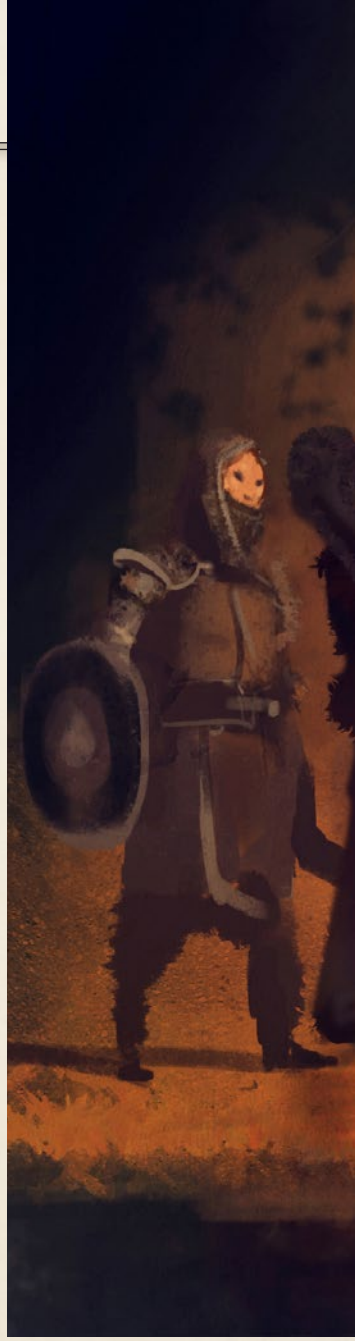


Table 32: Mystical Treasures

1D20	ITEM
1	Tall, thin vase of glazed porcelain, purple with a motif of bright red vines. Plants placed in the vase will not age, wither, bloom, or bear fruit.
2	Facial mask made of seashells in pink, white and light blue. Its wearer can hold their breath under water at up to ten meters' depth, for a maximum of ten minutes.
3	Handheld fan painted with stormy mountain scenery, which actively cools the air when waved. Roll 1D6 when used – a result of 6 inflicts 1D4 damage and causes facial hair to freeze.
4	Bronze bell whose inside and clapper is engraved with cuneiform characters. If carried so that it is hanging freely, it tinkles faintly whenever there is an abomination within a hundred meter radius, but at the risk of being detected *[10←the creatures Vigilant]*.
5	Notebook with thin pages of parchment and pearl-covered binding. Text written in the book is only visible to the person who wrote it.
6	Metal canister whose white color has largely peeled off. It is half full of a powder which conceals signs of aging on human skin for twenty-four hours, at the cost of 1D4 temporary corruption; contains enough powder for 10+1D10 applications.
7	Amulet set with a gray stone that emits a slimy secretion, which dries into an ineffective resin after a while. The secretion is enough for two individuals per scene. If applied on the skin, it has a repellent effect on insects; if the wearer succeeds with *[13←Resolute]* the insects select other targets.
8	Eight sticks of incense in a cylindrical leather case. Can be burned during negotiations, granting those with the *Manipulator* boon +2 to *Persuasive* tests.
9	Wedding ring of pure gold, adorned with six sapphires. A loving spirit is bound to the ring and can act in the wearer's defense; once per scene the wearer may reroll a failed *Defense* test. But the spirit is jealous and will haunt the wearer's romantic partner with horrifying nightmares.
10	Smooth wooden box containing two frameless spectacle lenses. Makes it easier to follow tracks in the wilderness (+1 to *Vigilant* tests), but weakens the other senses so that the wearer becomes less aware of her surroundings (–3 to *Vigilant* tests for detecting threats).
11	Three beautiful, cast-iron animal heads each the size of a clenched fist, completely free of rust – a wolf, a bear and a wild boar. Loops underneath allow them to be tied together into a bola, which adds +3 to the success test when thrown at creatures of the Beast category.
12	Long-stemmed briar pipe whose bowl is shaped like a woman's face with her eyes closed. Can be used when performing the *Oracle* ritual, with its smoke conveying the visions, granting a +3 bonus to *Resolute* tests.
13	Lantern with red glass in a metal frame, about the size of a tankard. When lit in an otherwise dim environment, it can expose people who are trying to hide intense feelings (such as outrage, love or grief). It takes one successful *Vigilant* test per target to notice their seemingly glowing outlines.
14	A simple right-handed chainmail gauntlet that needs relining. The person wearing it can never involuntarily lose her grip on the right-hand weapon.
15	A modest ring of low-karat gold, with cuneiform runes engraved on the inside (*"The cleansing one"*). Its owner can conceal any skin damage for one scene per day, including scars and tattoos. These can still be detected with *Witchsight* and a successful *Vigilant* test.
16	Key of blackened silver that can slide into most locks. Roll 1D6: on 1–4 the lock opens; on 5–6 the mechanism melts, making it impossible to unlock.
17	Staff of smoke-colored crystal, as long as one's palm, with one end shaped like a rounded point. When pointed at the North Star it gives a faint glow, granting +3 to Orientation tests, even underground.
18	Small copper pot, large enough to brew one dose of a single elixir. Adding an amount of silver equal to one (1) silver thaler makes the elixir one level stronger. If it is already Strong, the effect die is increased by one step.
19	Knife with a handle of scarlet wood and a ten centimeter curved blade, engraved with a running predator. Adds +2 to *Cunning* tests when harvesting a monster trophy.
20	Cracked, uncut ruby that emits enough heat to steam in cold and damp weather. If set in the hilt or grip of a one-handed weapon with the mystical quality Death Rune, the quality's effect die is increased to 1D10, at the cost of 1D4 temporary corruption per turn.

Table 33: Artifacts

1D12	ARTIFACT	PAGE
1	Ashiki's Twin Blades	133
2	Bunefer's Death Mask	134
3	The Wraith Mark of the Eternity Legion	136
4	Feud Crystal	137
5	Girakosh's Steel Circle	138
6	The Living Chain of Hogarz	140
7	Iloona's Mirror Shield	141
8	The Whispering Necklace of Lapi-Esha	142
9	Nema's Orbit Statuette	145
10	The War Horn of the Stormhowler	146
11	Worldcleaver	149
12	Xtala's Hourglass	150

Unearthing artifacts is the dream of all treasure hunters. However, sometimes the find turns out to be a pure nightmare.

Exploring Ruins

MANY OF THE ruins in Davokar are as much as two thousand years old, remnants of the people who long ago fled west from the devastated Asbarast and their descendants (see page 59 in *Symbar – Mother of Darkness* for an account of the region's history). Older remains also exist, but not of human design – if encountered, they originate from the cultures of trolls, arachs or some other race of cultural beings that dominated the land in different eras, before the arrival of elves and humans.

IRRESPECTIVE OF WHO once created the structures, the ruins are often of interest for player characters. They can be a target in their own right, or a base of operations for their enemies.

This chapter presents a series of tables which can be used to design interesting ruins. They can be used while playing, to randomly have the location take shape while the player characters are exploring it, or they can be seen as a source of inspiration for the Game Master who would rather design the site before the session starts.

ORIGINAL PURPOSE

The Game Master can use the original purpose of the ruin as a guideline when describing it – what material it is made from, which shape it has, how the rooms are arranged, and so on. The list mainly focus on Symbarian ruins, but with a bit of imagination and some adjustments, the generator could also apply to structures left behind by trolls, elves or others.

Table 34: Original Purpose

1D10	FUNCTION (D4)
1	Fortification (1: Small fort, 2: Stone fort, 3: Fortress ruin, 4: Massive fortress with wall and moat)
2	Prison (1: Mighty individual, 2: Dangerous artifact, 3: Hungry monster, 4: Shackled deity of nature)
3	Pyramid (1–2: Ziggurat, 3: Traditional pyramid, 4: Collection of 1D4 ziggurats)
4	Labyrinth (1: Garden labyrinth, 2: for entertainment, 3–4: for experiments)

5	Mine (1: Precious metal, 2: Gems, 3: Alchemical component, 4: Crystalized corruption)
6	Temple (1: Ancestral worship, 2: Spider worship, 3: Serpent temple, 4: Hero cult)
7	Seat of power (1: Magician's tower, 2: Priest's estate, 3: Royal palace, 4: Imperial pleasure palace)
8	Tomb (1: Lord/lady, 2: Revered mystic, 3: Petty king, 4: Member of the imperial or royal family)
9	Exhibition halls (1: Art & sculptures, 2: Antique jewelry, 3: Historical objects 4: Monster display)
10	Ritual chamber (1: Funerals, 2: Daemon summoning, 3: Fleshcrafting, 4: Daemonic exaltation)

REMAINING LEVELS

All ruins encountered in the woods have a number of intact levels above and below ground; separate rolls are made for each of these.

Above ground: 1D20–10. 0 or lower indicates that the ruin is completely destroyed above ground.

Below ground: 1D10

OVERALL FEATURE AND TRAITS

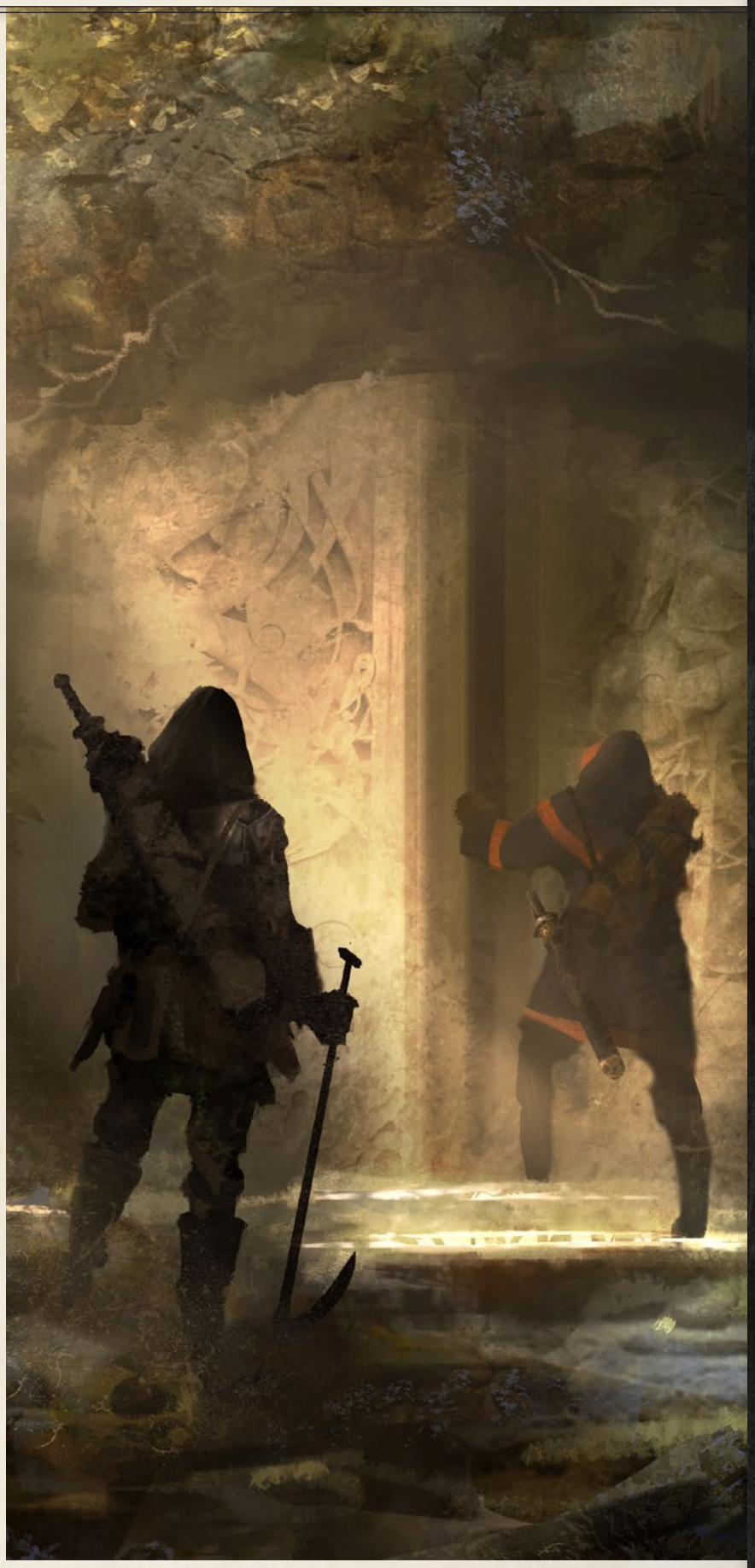
The ruin's overall feature indicates what condition it is in. The feature pertains to the ruin in its entirety and is purely descriptive. The ruin's trait refers to more substantial effects which affect all visitors.

Table 35: Overall Features

1D6	FEATURES
1	Water damaged
2	Dusty and desolate
3	Overgrown
4	Untouched and ominously clean
5	Inexplicably cold/hot
6	Darkened (all light is diminished)

Table 36: Traits

1D6	TRAITS
1	Corruptive: Temporary corruption gained inside the ruin is one Effect Die higher; 1 becomes 1D4, 1D4 becomes 1D6, and so on.
2	Sparse with treasure: All rolls for finding treasure have a second chance to fail.
3	Crowded: All rolls for the number of creatures in a room are made with 1D8 instead of 1D6



4	Desolate: All rolls for the number of creatures in a room are made with 1D4 instead of 1D6
5	Rich with treasure: All rolls for finding treasure have a second chance to succeed.
6	Lesser corruption: Temporary corruption gained inside the ruin is one Effect Die lower; 1D8 becomes 1D6, 1D6 becomes 1D4, and so on

INHABITANTS

The ruin's inhabitants – or temporary visitors – are living (or not...) agents which the players can interact with or be forced to fight. The Game Master decides on the resistance level of the creatures, adapting it to the prowess of the player characters and based on the monsters and adversaries described in the *Core Rulebook* and the *Monster Codex*.

Table 37: Inhabitants

1D20	INHABITANTS
1–3	Treasure hunters/Explorers
4–6	Goblins
7–8	Beasts
9–10	Arachs
11–12	Bestiaals
13–14	Trolls
15	Elves
16	Undead
17	Abominations
18–20	Make two rolls and keep both races; ignore results of 18 or higher

Treasure hunters: a group of treasure hunters or explorers are camped inside the ruin.

Goblins: a group of goblins have made the ruin their home, or have been forced into servitude by something else.

Beasts: a beast, or a pack of them, has sought shelter or is nesting inside the ruin.

Arachs: A group of arachs use the ruin as a base while hunting for artifacts in the area.

Bestiaals: One or more bestiaals has sought temporary refuge in the ruin.

Elves: a group of elves has made the ruin their base, or guard it from intruding plunderers.

Trolls: a group of trolls has their den inside the ruin, or sneak around looking for lost troll artifacts.

Undead: the ruin's previous inhabitants are not happy to stay in the tomb.

Abominations: the ruin is corrupted and attracts – or spawns – abominations.

If two groups inhabit the ruin, Table 38 can tell you how they relate to one another. The Game Master is, of course, free to make changes if this does not suit his/her particular scenario.

Table 38: Relations

1D6	RELATION
1	The groups are bitter enemies
2	The groups are unaware of each other
3	The groups are aware of each other, but do not interact
4	One group has been subjugated by the other
5	The groups work together, to some extent, but there is tension between them
6	The groups work together to a great extent, harmoniously

ENTRYWAYS TO OTHER LEVELS

Each level has one or two entryways to the level directly above and below it (separate rolls for each of them). If there are two entryways, they go through different rooms, provided that there is more than one room on the level in question.

Table 39: Entryways to Other Levels

1D8	ENTRYWAYS
1	Intact stone staircase: difficult to destroy (*Fortification* 20, *Breakpoint* 5, *Toughness* 10)*
2	Intact wooden staircase: can be destroyed (*Fortification* 10, *Breakpoint* 5, *Toughness* 10)*
3	Damaged staircase: easy to destroy (*Fortification* 5, *Breakpoint* 5, *Toughness* 10)*
4	Destroyed staircase; replaced by rope ladder/rope bridge
5	Completely destroyed staircase
6	Hole in the ground/ceiling

7	Hole in the ground/ceiling, with a ladder which can easily be pulled up/down
8	Roll twice

* See Damage on Buildings, the *Advanced Player's Guide* (page 106).

As these are the only ways to reach the other levels, they are natural positions for guard posts, barricades and traps. Groups of inhabitants who dominate certain levels usually set up safeguards at one or more of the entryways leading to their turf. However, between levels within said turf, such safeguards are less common (–1 modifier to the roll).

Table 40: Safeguards

1D10	DETAILS
1–2	No safeguards
3–4	Barricade only
5	Lone guard
6	Guard post
7	Trap
8	Lone guard + barricade
9	Guard post + barricade
10	Double guard post + barricade

Barricade: Attackers must spend an entire turn climbing to enter close combat. If in a hurry, a *Quick* test is required to get past it. Otherwise, doing so silently requires a *Discreet* test. Defenders can fire projectiles through or over the barricade without penalty, while attackers firing back at them have a –3 penalty on the success test.

Lone guard: A cultural being or guard beast tasked to raise the alarm in case of intruders.

Guard post: [PC –2] cultural beings, beasts, abominations or undead.

Trap: Can be detected with a *[Vigilant –3]* test, deals 1D12 damage plus poison (1–2: weak, 3: moderate, 4: strong). Requires a passed *[Strong –3]* test to break loose, and triggers an alarm which is heard across the entire level. Disarming it requires a *[Cunning –3]* test and a *[Discreet –3]* test in order to do so quietly.

ROOMS PER LEVEL

Each level consists of 1D8 rooms (where 1 = a single, vast hall). The exact layout is for the Game Master to decide. Each room has at least one door or doorway leading to another room.

Table 41: Entryways to Other Rooms

1D8	DETAILS
1	Opening, no door
2	Wooden door, broken. Opening it unnoticed requires a *Discreet* test
3	Wooden door, intact, unlocked, broken lock
4	Wooden door, intact, locked. Picking the lock quietly requires a *Discreet* test; can be kicked in with a *Strong* test
5	Reinforced wooden door, intact, unlocked, broken lock. Opening it unnoticed requires a *Discreet* test
6	Reinforced wooden door, intact, locked. Picking the lock quietly requires a *Discreet* test; cannot be kicked in, but can be destroyed with the right tools (*Fortification* 5, *Breakpoint* 5, *Toughness* 10)*
7	Copper or iron door, unlocked. Opening the door without it creaking loudly requires a successful *Discreet* test
8	Copper or iron door, locked, and rusted/corroded shut. Picking its lock requires a successful *Cunning* test; then the door can be opened with a *[Strong –5]* test. The ensuing noise cannot be avoided

THE DETAILS OF THE ROOMS

The following table determines what each room contains, such as inhabitants, traps or other dangers, or treasures in the room.

Table 42: Details Regarding the Room

1D12	DETAILS
1	Nothing of interest
2	Creature: one individual of the group dominating the level
3	Group: [PC –2] creatures of the group which dominates the level
4	Crowd: [PC +2] creatures of the group dominating the level
5	Trap: can be detected with a *[Vigilant –3]* test, deals 1D12 damage plus poison (1–2: weak, 3: moderate, 4: strong). Breaking loose requires a successful *[Strong –3]* test
6	Collapsing ceiling (deals 1D12 damage, pass a *Quick* test to halve the damage, creates a hole in the ceiling)
7	Collapsing floor (5 meters down, creates a hole in the floor)
8	Remains: Fresh or old corpse/skeleton of a cultural being, wearing jewelry and/or coins worth 1D10 thaler
9	Wealthy remains: Fresh or old corpse/skeleton of a cultural being, wearing jewelry, items and/or coins worth 2D100 thaler
10	An item: The Game Master decides, or lets the players roll on Table 31 on page 100
11	Treasure trove: requires *Vigilant* test to be found; roll 1D4+1 times on Table 30 on page 100
12	Roll twice on the table

Ceremonies

CEREMONIES IS the generic term for rituals which must be performed by a group of mystics, and which are powerful enough to permanently alter the local geography and the course of history. They can cause firestorms, earthquakes, insect swarms, diseased winds, volcanic eruptions, devastating tidal waves, and more.

BUT CEREMONIES ARE performed at great cost, in both corruption and uncontrollable side effects. After a series of catastrophic incidents during The Great War, a prohibition was introduced against performing, and passing on knowledge about, ceremonial magic. In today's Ambria, all violations are considered acts of high treason.

Ceremonies are intended to be a dramatic tool to be used by *Symbaroum's* Game Masters, not something the player characters can learn or use. Sure, it is theoretically possible for a group of characters to successfully perform a ceremony, either by themselves or with the help of allies. But the basic idea is that mystical ceremonies should be used by hostile factions or groups, and that the characters are tasked with preventing the devastation which will otherwise be afflicted on the world.

Rules for Ceremonies

SINCE CEREMONIES ARE merely intended as dramatic tools for creating exciting stories, they do not need to be regulated in detail.

The descriptions below should be viewed as suggestions and guidelines which the Game Master may follow, adjust or ignore, depending on what best suits his or her story. The most important thing is that the players feel that their characters' choices and actions have a chance to impact the effect of the ceremony – if it is interrupted in time, there is every reason to celebrate; if it takes full effect, it becomes a cause for guilt and soul-searching.

THE EXECUTION

To perform a mystical ceremony, one requires written instructions on the procedure and a group of loyal individuals with mystical schooling. One also needs to gather material for the ceremonial circle, establish a mystical link to the place where the ceremony will take effect, and possibly obtain an appropriate sacrifice. In other words, it is something that takes a lot of time and effort.

The ceremonial book: Ceremonies are much too complex for a mystic to memorize in detail; he or she must follow instructions recorded in a tome, on a series of stone tablets, parchment scrolls, or something of that nature. Despite the security regulations, one can expect there to be at least two copies of each ceremonial text, but all of them are most likely hidden and/or guarded. The stealing of a ceremonial book will not go unnoticed, and the victim of such a theft will do just about anything to get it back.

The participants: It takes at least four people to perform a mystical ceremony, but there should preferably be more, to mitigate the corruption suffered by individual participants (see Corruption and Sacrifices below) and as a precaution in case someone should try to interrupt the ceremony (see Interrupting ceremonies).

One participant is the ceremony's Officiant, meaning the mystic in charge of it all. The Officiant must have attained Master level in a mystical tradition or have the *Ritualist* ability, while the requirements are lower for other participants – they only need novice training in a mystical tradition or the *Ritualist* ability, or they must possess the *Channeling* ability (the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 63).

Ceremonial Focus: A ceremony takes place in two locations – one where the participants are gathered, and one where the ceremony takes effect. As long as the latter can be seen from the former, no mystical link needs to be established between the two, but if the distance is too great or the view is blocked, the Officiant must prepare a specific ceremonial focus which is placed in advance where the effect is to occur. What kind of object is needed is specified in the description of the respective ceremony.

Finding this hidden ceremonial focus is virtually impossible for an outsider, and is therefore not a viable way to interrupt the ceremony – the area that must be searched is too vast, the object too small, and those who planted it (usually) too calculating. There can be exceptions, however, if the Game Master thinks that it is appropriate and will increase the suspense.

Procedure: Like other rituals, ceremonies are performed in a circle of symbols and mystically charged objects, making it easier to gather and focus the mystical energies of Creation. The Officiant and the participants position themselves along the outer edge of the circle, facing its center and the sacrifice which (if any) has been prepared.

When the preparations have been made and the ceremony begins, the Officiant and the participants drift into a trance and remain completely detached from the world until the ceremony is interrupted or completed. It may therefore be a good idea to hire a guard force to protect the defenseless mystics.

Timescale: Acquiring everything needed for the ceremony can take weeks or years, but when a ceremonial book, ceremonial focus, and other components are in place, it takes between twelve and twenty-four hours to complete the procedure. The final stage, starting with the participants going into a trance, takes at least an hour, but its duration should mainly be determined according to what suits the story (that is: what makes it as dramatic as possible).

CORRUPTION AND SACRIFICES

As a basic rule, the participants of a ceremony collectively suffer 5D6 points of temporary corruption.

The corruption comes into effect immediately after the ceremony is interrupted or completed. If it is not interrupted before reaching its conclusion, each participant also suffers 1 point of permanent corruption.

The temporary corruption is distributed between the participants as evenly as possible, while the excess amount is dealt to the Officiant. For example, if four people perform a ceremony which causes 14 temporary corruption, the Officiant suffers 5 points, and the others 3.

One way to reduce the corruption is to bind a sacrifice to the ceremony – either a living creature or a summoned daemon. In the former case, it could be a human or an animal of at least human size. If the creature has 1 or more total corruption, 1D6 is rolled and the outcome is subtracted from the ceremony's corruptive effect; if the creature is completely untainted, 1D8 is rolled instead. In any case, the victim dies when the ceremony concludes or is interrupted at stage 3 or 4 (see Interrupting ceremonies).

If, in the process, the Officiant summons and successfully subdues a daemon (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 94), it can be used to channel part of the corruption into the Yonderworld. It works the same as with living creatures, except that 1D10 is rolled and the daemon is banished instead of being killed.

SIDE EFFECTS FROM CEREMONIES

Ceremonies disrupt the natural order in many far-reaching ways, and have consequences not even the most powerful mystics can foresee. However, all who are powerful enough to use ceremonies know that the channeled power will have some kind of repercussions – something they must take into account when determining whether a ceremony is worth performing at all.

The side effects are divided into general and specific ones. The general effects can occur irrespective of what ceremony is performed, and are described below; the specific ones are unique to each ceremony and described in conjunction with them. Also, note that all side effects can occur in the area where the ceremony is performed, where it takes effect, or in both locations. The Game Master

Terms of the Prohibition

In the kingdom of Ambria, only the monarch can grant the right to study the art of ceremonial magic and pass on such knowledge to someone else; in the latter case, the recipient of said knowledge also requires the monarch's approval. All ceremonial books must be registered and kept in such a way that only their owner can access them, and copying entire or large parts of any such text is a crime equivalent to performing a ceremony. Only the monarch can issue exemptions to the prohibition against ceremonies, and requests for such exemptions are only accepted from the Field Marshal, the Grand Master of Ordo Magica, and the head of the Sun Church.

decides which side effects are activated (general and/or specific) depending on what offers the greatest dramatic potential.

Listed below are several examples of general side effects from ceremonial magic which the Game Master can use directly or as inspiration. The effects are usually permanent, unless the Game Master for one reason or another thinks it more suitable (or interesting) to make them temporary/reversible.

If the Game Master wishes for greater randomness, Table 43 can be used to determine which side effects occur. If so, make as many rolls as is detailed in the column Effect in Table 44; should the dice land on the same effect twice at the same place, just re-roll the dice until a new effect comes into play.

Ceremonies are immensely powerful, but also generate immense and unavoidable surges of corruption.

Table 43: Ceremonial Side Effects

1D20	SIDE EFFECTS
1–10	The ceremony's unique side effect
11	Life Runs Out
12	Increased Corruption
13	Mystical Curse
14	Wave of Corruption
15	Echo of Corruption
16	Corrupting Environment
17	Death Flees
18	Unsound Temptation
19	The Dead Awake
20	Corrupted Waters

Life Runs Out: No children are born alive in the location, harvests wither for no apparent reason, and the place soon becomes a miniature Alberetor, in all its lifeless desolation. Not even the wind seems to blow in the area; dust stirred by careless feet slowly floats to the ground.

Increased Corruption: The ceremony has woken the vengeful wrath of the area, and the effect die for all actions which give the user temporary corruption is increased by one tier (from 1 to D4, D4 to D6, and so on). If the effect occurs where the ceremony is performed, this applies to the area outside the circle.

Mystical Curse: The area's darkness makes it difficult to muster power for mystical work; each success test for activating a mystical power or ritual gets a second chance to fail. If the effect occurs where the ceremony is performed, this applies to the area outside the circle.

Wave of Corruption: A wave of corruptive energy emanates outward from the place where the ceremony is performed or takes effect. Everyone in the area immediately suffers 2D6 temporary corruption; everyone within a fifty-meter radius is also knocked unconscious unless they pass a *Resolute* test. They remain unconsciousness for one scene. If the effect occurs where the ceremony is performed, this applies to the area outside the circle.

Echo of Corruption: The area's infectious darkness echoes strongly, and all temporary corruption suffered by creatures remains until they have left the affected area.

Corrupting Environment: The place reeks with corruption, and everyone in the area must pass a *Strong* test every hour or suffer 1D4 temporary corruption. The corruption does not leave the afflicted until he or she leaves the area. If the effect occurs where the ceremony is performed, this applies to the area outside the circle.

Death Flees: Undeath, as in the race Undead, is spreading like the plague; the dead will not remain still, and rise with their minds intact.

Unsound Temptation: The area gains the properties of Dark Davokar. If it is in Ambria, creatures which are otherwise found in Bright Davokar may be encountered there; if it is in Bright Davokar, the area turns into an enclave of Dark Davokar in terms of what monsters inhabit the place (see Travel & Encounters on page 183 in the *Core Rulebook* to learn what monster can usually be found where).

The Dead Awake: The buried dead claw their way out of their tombs and haunt the place at night (stats like Dragouls, page 230 in the *Core Rulebook*). If any living person stays in the area, they will only survive the night behind reinforced walls and sealed gates.

Corrupted Waters: The area's groundwater becomes a source of corruption; those who drink from it suffer 1D8 temporary corruption with each drink. It is possible to visit the area without being affected, as long as one brings water from somewhere else.

INTERRUPTING CEREMONIES

Now we arrive at the central question: how can the player characters interrupt an ongoing ceremony?

The struggle to interrupt a ceremony should be made into an exciting multistage challenge. The basis of this is that ceremonies have different effects depending on whether or not they are interrupted and, if so, when. Simply put: the faster the characters manage to overcome the obstacles between them and the participants of the ceremony, the weaker its effect becomes. Table 44 can be used as a guideline, where Stage 1 begins as soon as the participants go into a trance and Stage 4 specifies what happens if the characters' efforts are entirely futile.

The Game Master should set up a series of obstacles for the player characters, and decide on how many turns or scenes they have to overcome them before the ceremony advances to the next stage. These obstacles could include...

Table 44: The Effect of the Ceremony

STAGE	EFFECT
Stage 1	The ceremony is interrupted, but the place where it is performed suffers one side effect.
Stage 2	The ceremony is interrupted, but the place where it is performed and where it was to take effect each suffer one side effect (the same or different ones).
Stage 3	The ceremony yields what in the description is called Half Effect; the place where it is performed and where it takes effect each suffer one or two side effects.
Stage 4	The ceremony yields what in the description is called Full Effect; the place where it is performed and where it takes effect each suffer one to three side effects.

... sneaking past or eliminating enemy sentries.
... navigating through an underground maze or a giant ruin.
... picking or breaking through a locked door.
... figuring out the password to a door sealed by mystical powers.
... getting past/through/across physical obstacles
... getting past or disarming traps.
... neutralizing the ceremony's guard force (one or more waves/lines of defense).

In the end, there is really just one way to stop an ongoing ceremony: the player characters must kill the Officiant or break the concentration of enough participating mystics before the ceremony is completed. As mentioned earlier, it takes at least one Officiant and three participants to successfully perform a ceremony; fewer than that and it is immediately interrupted.

Ordinary participants lose their concentration, and therefore their role in the ceremony, if they are wounded and subsequently fail a *[Resolute –Damage]* test (let the players roll). The Officiant, however, is in such a deep trance that damage cannot break his/her concentration; the person must be killed (reach o *Toughness*). This interrupts the ceremony regardless of how many participants are left standing.

Mystical Ceremonies

ALTHOUGH FAR FROM all stories of ceremonial magic are true, this type of powerful ritual exists within several of the established traditions. It is well known among mystics that ceremonies were used by both sides in The Great War; the Dark Lords used them frequently, and wizards and theurgs retaliated in kind. In Ambria the knowledge is kept alive by a select few theurgs and Masters of the Order, who also serve as guardians of the ceremonial books that still remain. The knowledge is shared by their apprentices as well, but other than that, very few people know the secrets of ceremonial magic.

The only real exception is a handful of centuries-old wizards, such as Grand Master Seldonio, Elionara Yellowcat, and Kullinan Furia. These have retained their knowledge from before the prohibition, but their books were confiscated and probably destroyed, or registered and put under the protection of a guardian. The foremost of these guardians are Variol the Stormweaver and Farvano Kaldel in Agrella, and Leona Galaldo in Yndaros.

Described below are sixteen ceremonies for the Game Master to use, either directly or as inspiration for his/her own creations. Note that these

Ceremonies and Mystical Traditions

The power wielded when performing ceremonies is far too overwhelming for the practices and patterns of mystical traditions to contain their corrupting effect. The tradition specified under each ceremony is mainly supposed to indicate their origin and what type of mystics might possess a ceremonial tome on the subject.

Note that some traditions never developed any ceremonies at all, for fear of their terrible effects and side effects. The vast majority were created by wizards and sorcerers, while symbolists and trollsingers have refrained from inflicting such violence on Creation.

descriptions have deliberately been left somewhat vague, so the Game Master will be free to portray the effect in as dramatic a fashion as possible.

FIRESTORM

Tradition: Wizardry

Anything combustible immediately catches fire, partially or entirely. Strong, whirling gusts of wind start feeding the flames, causing the fire to spread in all directions.

Ceremonial Focus: A piece of charred hardwood, the length of a human forearm.

Half Effect: All organic material within the area of effect is bathed in scorching heat, but only that which is dry or almost dry catches fire – such as timber, dead grass, textiles and the bark of living trees. One tenth of everyone in the area dies immediately from their burns, and there is a strong likelihood that all buildings will burn to the ground. Player characters (and important non-player characters) immediately take 1D8 points of fire damage (ignores *Armor*) and must pass a *Quick* test to extinguish their burning clothes/armor. Then they must escape the fire with another *Quick* test – failure inflicts another 1D8 points of fire damage (ignores *Armor*).

Full Effect: All organic material within the area of effect immediately catches fire, including the skin of living creatures. Anything combustible and all living creatures except the player characters and important non-player characters are destroyed in the inferno. The latter take 1D8 fire damage per turn (ignores *Armor*) until they extinguish their burning bodies with a successful *[Quick –5]* test. While fleeing the area, everyone inevitably takes 1D8 fire damage (ignores *Armor*), and another 1D8 unless they pass a *Quick* test.

Unique Side Effect: The fiery energies linger in the area and might blaze up when one least expects it. Anyone traveling through the area of effect must roll 1D10; on 1 they are hit by a burning gust that deals 1D8 damage (ignores *Armor*) and sets fire to their clothes and armor. Anyone who remains in the area rolls 1D10 every day with the same effect.

TIDAL WAVE

Tradition: Witchcraft

The water of a river or lake pulls away from the shoreline and forms a crushing wave that sweeps far inland, devastating buildings and creatures alike.

Ceremonial Focus: The shell of a hermit crab, uncracked and perfectly symmetrical.

Half Effect: The tidal wave crashes over the entire area of effect, but loses power so the water is no more than roughly one meter deep. All smaller objects take the full force of the wave and are washed away unless securely attached; living creatures also risk being knocked down and washed away by the force of the current – which automatically affects one tenth of everyone in the area. Player characters (and important non-player characters) inevitably take 1D8 points of crushing damage (ignores *Armor*) and must pass a *Strong* test to avoid falling over – on failure they are caught by the current and take 1D10 crushing damage (ignores *Armor*) on their way out into the water.

Full Effect: The tidal wave sweeps ashore, several meters high, crushing everything in its path. Even the sturdiest stone structures collapse, partially or completely, and all living creatures are carried away. Player characters (and important non-player characters) have a chance to survive by clinging to something solid, like a large tree or boulder anchored in the earth – but it takes a *Quick* test followed by a *Strong* test for them to hold on and hold their breath. If successful they only take 2D8 crushing damage (ignores *Armor*) from objects crashing into them. On failure the damage sustained is 4D8 (ignores *Armor*) and the characters are washed far out into the water.

Unique Side Effect: The kinetic energy lingers in the area and smaller waves may appear without warning. Any group or person near the shoreline must roll 1D10; if anyone rolls a 1, all of them are hit by a crushing wave that deals 1D8 damage (ignores *Armor*) and sinks all vessels moored or beached there.

SUMMON DAEMON COURT

Tradition: Sorcery

The Yonderworld and the world of the living merge as the entire court of a daemon prince is summoned to the ceremony's area of effect, which in this case surrounds the ceremonial circle.

Ceremonial Focus: One or several skulls from people once loved by the Officiant.

Half Effect: A part of the Yonderworld materializes and replaces the area's ordinary nature. Everyone in the area (except the Officiant) is affected as if they were in the Yonderworld (see page 41). The court only remains in the living world for a single day, no matter how many skulls were used as the ceremonial focus.

Full Effect: As half effect, except everyone who participated in the ceremony is shielded from the place's corruption; they also have the daemons to protect them from potential disrupters.

The court remains in the world for as many days as the number of skulls used as ceremonial focus. During this time the Officiant may ask the Daemon Prince for one favor per day. If the favor involves a ceremony participant making a pact

Adventures at Ceremonial Sites

An alternate way of using ceremonies is to have adventures take place at former ceremonial sites. That way the unique side effect becomes an exciting complication for the player characters, and the world's history will seem more tangible and alive.

with the prince, the answer is always yes; favors of a different nature may be granted if the Officiant passes a *[Resolute –8]* test. If the favor is denied, the Officiant may ask for the same favor the next day, as long as there are days left. The Daemon Prince never grants a favor that requires him to leave his throne.

Unique Side Effect: Every year the area temporarily transforms into Corrupted Nature (see page 22 in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*) on the days when the daemon court was there. In the middle of the blighted nature, where the Daemon Prince's throne once stood, is a portal to the Yonderworld.

INSECT SWARM

Tradition: Witchcraft

The Officiant attracts all flying insects within a day's march and gathers them in a seething cloud over the place where the ceremony is performed. The energies corrupt the winged creatures, and diseases carried by a few of them spread to them all. The enormous swarm which is finally directed at the defenseless victims in the target area is dangerous enough in itself, with venomous stingers and thousands of ravenous jaws, but it also spreads corruption as well as deadly diseases.

Ceremonial Focus: A gem the size of a human eye, cut to resemble the compound eye of a fly.

Half Effect: Half the swarm is scattered on its way to the targeted area, where it then splits into several smaller swarms. Present creatures may try to fight each individual swarm, but all who face them in melee combat are exposed to a Strong Disease (see the *Monster Codex*, page 168) or some other life-threatening malady. Furthermore, the corruptive effect makes 1D6 victims blight born, while the Strong disease takes hold in the affected area.

Full Effect: The entire swarm reaches its target, buzzing and clacking as it attacks all living creatures. The only way to stay alive is to hide in a place with thick walls/doors and not even the slightest crack or air intake. Characters (and important non-player characters) present in the affected area may roll a *[Cunning –5]* test to protect themselves; if the test fails the swarm tears the flesh from their bones, and if it succeeds they are still attacked by the swarm, but for a shorter period of time, suffering 1D6 damage, 1D4 temporary corruption, and exposing themselves to a Strong disease.

Unique Side Effect: The swarm is split but remains in the area as colonies of winged abominations. All living creatures moving through the terrain must pass a *Discreet* test once a day or attract 1D4 swarms with the stats specified below.

CORRUPTED INSECT SWARM			
Race	Abomination (Winged Creatures)		
Resistance	Ordinary		
Traits	*Corrupting Attack* (I), *Infectious* (III) *Piercing Attack* (II), *Swarm* (III), *Wings* (II)		
Accurate 13 (–3), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 7 (+3), **Quick** 15 (–5), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Strong** 11 (–1), **Vigilant** 10 (0)			
Abilities	None		
Weapons Accurate	Stinger 0 (piercing 5) and 1D4 temporary corruption,		
Armor	A quarter of damage, according to *Swarm* III		
Defense	+5		
Toughness	11	**Pain Threshold**	6
Shadow	Glossy darkish green, like the head of a blowfly (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The swarm acts on instinct and attacks its enemies until they die or the swarm is destroyed.			

EARTHQUAKE

Tradition: Wizardry

The power of the ceremony heaves the earth, razes buildings, and opens fissures in the ground. Living creatures caught up in the ferocious quake would be very lucky to get through the nightmare alive.

Ceremonial Focus: A fist-sized piece of black bedrock.

Half Effect: The ground shakes and wobbles so violently that buildings of wood, clay or similar inevitably collapse; the same may happen to stone structures (the Game Master decides or rolls 1D6 per building, where a result of 1 means collapse). Smaller cracks open in the ground, only to close once the earthquake has passed; anyone caught in a crack is badly injured and stuck until others dig them out. Player characters (and important non-player characters) must pass a *Quick* test to avoid tumbling into a crack or being struck by falling rocks and trees. Failure means that they take 1D10 damage (ignores *Armor*).

Full Effect: The ground heaves several meters into the air, razing trees to the ground and opening deep earth wounds all over the area of effect. All buildings collapse and almost everyone in the area will be killed by falling trees or rocks, or by falling to their death into the chasm. Player characters (and important non-player characters) must pass a *[Quick –5]* test to avoid fissures or falling building material. On failure they are crushed to death.

Unique Side Effect: The earth in the area keeps rumbling. Any group or person passing through

there must roll 1D10; a result of 1 means that a series of 1D6 earthquakes occurs, each with the same effect as the *Quake* ritual (see page 92 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*).

LAVA LAKE

Tradition: Wizardry
Cracks open in the ground, all the way down to the liquid core of the earth, bringing devastatingly hot fumes and lava to the surface. Anyone who fails to get away dies a terrible death.
Ceremonial Focus: An obsidian shard from the heart of a slumbering volcano.
Half Effect: Abyssal fissures open in the ground inside the area of effect, and hot, poisonous fumes flow from the depths. A tenth of the people in the area are killed before they have time to escape. Player characters (and important non-player characters) inevitably take 1D8 damage from the heat (ignores *Armor*) and must pass a *Strong* test not to be afflicted by a Strong poison (damage 4 for 4 turns). Then the lava comes bubbling up, covering the ground and destroying everything in the area.
Full Effect: The lava gushes up along with the fumes, only moments after the cracks have opened. Almost no one can escape, but player characters (and important non-player characters) might just be able to: with a successful *Strong* test they avoid being poisoned by the fumes (see above); if the characters also pass a test against *[Quick –5]* they are only hit by a spatter of lava, which deals 1D12 damage (ignores *Armor*). Those who fail the latter test will meet their doom in the lava lake that continues to fill the area of effect.
Unique Side Effect: None, aside from the landscape being turned into a plain of cooled, solidified lava.

MASS CURSE

Tradition: Witchcraft
A village or settlement that angers the wrong witchcraft wielder might soon face a terrible fate that in the long run may jeopardize the lives of all its inhabitants, or at least make their lives unbearably difficult.
Ceremonial Focus: The spine of an amphibian.
Half Effect: The ceremony has the same effect as the *Torment* ritual (see page 95 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*), and everyone in the area suffers the desired effect. The difference is that the ceremony requires no mystical link to the victims, and the effect cannot be canceled by *Break Link* – the Officiant must die for that to happen.
Full Effect: As half effect, but the Officiant can control who within the area does or does not suffer the effect.
Unique Side Effect: None

MASS HEALING

Tradition: Theurgy
The world under Prios' heaven is full of power, and faithful servants of the Sun God can channel that energy to treat the injured and infirm – healing their wounds and cleansing their bodies.
Ceremonial Focus: A sanctified sun symbol.
Half Effect: All living creatures within the area of effect (not Abominations or Undead) immediately recover 5D6 *Toughness*, and are cured of all poison and disease.
Full Effect: As half effect, but the Officiant can sense the aura around each individual in the area and thus has complete control over who is and is not blessed with Prios' gift.
Unique Side Effect: None, but Life Runs Out is a common side effect.

MASS RESURRECTION

Tradition: Sorcery
Dark mystics have always preferred undead slaves over living followers, whose loyalty may falter and whose bodies need feeding. The Mass Resurrection ceremony focuses its energies on whole battlefields for the purpose of raising, in one swoop, an army of Dragouls, bound to the Officiant's will – which is partly why it has become customary to gather and burn the dead after each battle.
Ceremonial Focus: A sacrifice in the form of a cultural being, whose heart is slowly incinerated in the process.
Half Effect: All corpses on the battlefield are reanimated (stats as a Dragoul, page 230 in the *Core Rulebook*), but the Officiant only controls half of them and must direct them in battle against the others. When the dust has settled, the army is only a third of what it could have been – probably not large enough to achieve the goal of the ceremony (see below).
Full Effect: The Officiant reanimates and takes control of all corpses on the battlefield, creating an army large enough to achieve the goal of the ceremony. This could include storming a fortress, destroying a village, defending the mystic's own stronghold, or facing another hostile force on the battlefield.
Unique Side Effect: None, but the side effects Death Flees and the Dead Awake are quite common.

MONSTER CONTROL

Tradition: Sorcery
An immensely powerful creature is torn from its home and instantly relocated to the area of effect through a portal in space and time, and is now under the absolute control of the officiant. At least initially...

Ceremonial Focus: A claw, tooth, or similar body fragment from the type of creature that is to be summoned.
Half Effect: The ceremony is successful, and a monster with stats that correspond to Mighty resistance is summoned to the area of effect. The Officiant has complete control over the creature's actions, but only for 10 turns – after that the monster regains control. The Game Master decides what the monster does next, but on the first turn after the awakening it will probably be too confused to act at all.
Full Effect: The ceremony summons a giant beast with stats equivalent to Legendary resistance (see page 99 of this book). The Officiant has complete control over the creature's actions for one day, after which the Officiant makes a test against the monster's *Resolute [Resolute←Resolute]* every day to see whether control is maintained. When the Officiant loses control, the monster has no memory of what has happened.
Unique Side Effect: The monster suffers 1D8 temporary corruption when summoned. If it becomes thoroughly corrupted as a result, the control is immediately broken and the creature turns into an abomination, with all that entails in terms of new traits and insatiable hunger. Worse still: the monster is filled with a thirst for revenge and instinctively recognizes the mystical signature of the Officiant who summoned it – it can sense the direction and distance to the mystic whenever that person uses mystical abilities/rituals.

DAEMONIC TUNNEL

Tradition: Sorcery
The ceremony digs a tunnel through the Yonderworld and creates a shortcut between two places in the world of the living. The tunnel goes from the ceremonial site to any place in the regular world where the ceremonial focus has been placed. Creatures who stand ready by the ceremonial circle can pass through the tunnel and thereby ignore distance and physical obstacles in the regular world.
Ceremonial Focus: A crystal cylinder made of sand from the Yonderworld.
Half Effect: The portal collapses earlier than expected and only half of the creatures inside the tunnel manage to get through (see Full Effect). Those who do not make it out in time are cast into the Yonderworld.
Full Effect: The portal is wide enough for four human-sized creatures marching shoulder to shoulder, and lasts long enough for up to eight rows of human-sized creatures to pass through it. Only two creatures with the trait *Robust* III can pass side by side, and only four rows will make it through in time. As for creatures with the *Colossal* trait, only two individuals can squeeze through the tunnel before it collapses.
Unique Side Effect: Sometimes the tunnel emerges spontaneously as a result of a magical echo, sucking in creatures from one side and spitting them out on the other. This can happen once per day, affecting everyone within sight of the place where the tunnel starts or ends, on a roll of 1 on 1D20. Everyone in the danger zone must pass a *[Strong –5]* test to avoid being sucked in; the *Robust* trait adds +2 per level, and the *Colossal* trait negates the effect completely. There is also a 1 on 1D10 chance of the tunnel collapsing so quickly that anyone sucked into it is cast into the Yonderworld instead.

PEST WIND

Tradition: Sorcery
Dormant pathogens and disease-carrying insects come together into a whirling wind that sweeps the area of effect like a dark, buzzing fog.
Ceremonial Focus: A piece of meat from a cultural creature stricken by a Strong disease.
Half Effect: Everyone in the area is exposed to a Strong disease (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 169).
Full Effect: As half effect, with the addition that the disease is particularly virulent: all tests for contracting and recovering from the disease are made against *[Strong –5]*. Furthermore, the course of the disease is very aggressive. Immediately after contracting it, the afflicted will experience vomiting, cramps, diarrhea or other symptoms that prevent the person from performing anything but reactive actions for the duration of the illness.
Unique Side Effect: The disease lies dormant in the area, waiting to spread. Anyone who ventures there must roll 1D10; on 1 the person is exposed to a Strong disease, either airborne or transmitted through physical contact.

RAGE

Tradition: Wizardry
A blinding rage consumes all living creatures, driving them into a berserk frenzy and compelling them to attack everything and everyone around them with murderous intent.
Ceremonial Focus: A piece of charcoal, which starts to glow hotter and hotter during the ceremony.
Half Effect: The rage affects everyone and remains uncontrollable for one turn. After that, half of all creatures within the area of effect manage to quell their anger and break the frenzy. Player characters (and important non-player characters) make a *Resolute* test at the start of the second turn after the effect has occurred – a success immediately cancels the effect. They must then try to handle those who did not do as well, who remain enraged until the end of the scene.

Full Effect: As half effect, but the rage is much harder to overcome. It is only possible after three turns, and only one tenth of the creatures in the area succeed. Player characters (and important non-player characters) make a test against *[Resolute –5]* at the start of the fourth turn after the effect has occurred, in order to control their anger.
Unique Side Effect: None

CREATE CORRUPTED NATURE

Tradition: Sorcery
An area is drenched in corrupting energies, so much so that it is permanently damaged and darkened. The phenomenon as such is described in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, on page 22.
Ceremonial Focus: A fist of corrupted plant seeds.
Half Effect: The area is corrupted, but in what way is out of the Officiant's control. Consult the tables on page 25 of the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* to determine which and how many effects occur.
Full Effect: The Officiant can decide in what way the affected area is corrupted, by choosing up to six effects from Table 3: Dangers in Corrupt Nature on page 25 of the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*.
Unique Side Effect: Nature's capricious vengeance causes half of the effects (rounded up) to occur around the ceremonial circle instead of in the intended area.

STARFALL

Tradition: Wizardry
The Officiant calls blazing rocks from the sky and steers them toward a specific area. People who are not directly hit may be killed by the shock wave or other side effects that follow the boulders.
Ceremonial Focus: A meteorite fragment, at least the size of a fist.
Half Effect: A scattered shower of ten smaller rocks rains over the affected area. A tenth of all creatures present at the time perish from direct hits or the fiery area effect; the rest have a chance to survive. Characters (and important non-player characters) situated in the area may roll a *Quick* test – if it fails, they are killed instantly; if it succeeds, they take 2D6 points of crushing damage (armor protects as usual).
Full Effect: A boulder the size of an ogre and a large number of smaller rocks crash into the center of the affected area. Nearby buildings are razed, damaged, or set on fire, and half of all creatures in the area perish immediately. Player characters (and important non-player characters) situated there may roll a *[Quick –5]* test – if it fails, they are killed instantly; if it succeeds, they take 2D6 points of crushing damage (armor protects as usual).
Unique Side Effect: The impact of the crashing rocks agitates the elemental forces and gives rise to fire spirits who immediately try to possess surviving creatures in the area. The living must pass a *Resolute* test, or their bodies are taken over by destructive fire elementals. These creatures assume the attributes of their hosts, with the additions stated down below, and they attack every potentially flammable object around – buildings, plants, and creatures wearing clothes. If the host body is knocked unconscious or hit by a water cascade (at least five liters in one turn), the spirit is banished and ceases to exist; the same happens if the host body dies.

FIRE ELEMENTAL, ADDITION	
Manner	Fanatical
Weapons	Smoldering fists 3+2 (burning)
Armor	+3 Flaming aura, takes no damage from fire or mystical powers that manifest themselves in the form of fire
Shadow	A furious yellowish white, like the hottest part of a blazing pyre (corruption: 0)

RESURRECT

Tradition: Theurgy
A dead or undead creature (not abomination) is brought back from the dead and is fully alive once more, with or without side effects...
Ceremonial Focus: A personal link (a glass of blood, a tuft of hair, or a cherished item) to an individual who means a lot to the deceased; it could be a descendant, a lover or a close relative.
Half Effect: The dead person returns to life, but with permanent corruption still lingering inside *[Corruption Threshold –1]* and with great memory gaps – half of the person's abilities have been forgotten (the Game Master chooses which ones or lets chance decide). The resurrected individual is also more fragile than before: 1D10 is rolled every time the *Pain Threshold* is exceeded; on 1 the resurrected individual dies immediately.
Full Effect: The deceased returns to life and is essentially the same as he or she was at the moment of death, only perfectly healthy and without injuries. But the frailty of the flesh cannot be avoided: 1D10 is rolled every time the *Pain Threshold* is exceeded; on 1 the resurrected individual dies immediately.
Unique Side Effect: Raising the dead is of course an act of immense violence against Creation and may therefore have greater repercussions than other ceremonies. The amount of corruption inflicted on the participants of the ceremony is doubled, from 5D6 to 10D6. How these points are distributed between the participants is calculated as usual.

Legendary Creatures

AN ADVENTURE'S CLIMAX does not always have to be a fateful confrontation with the group, person, or creature standing between the player characters and their ultimate goal. But in many cases it is, and in this chapter we want to address the creation of memorable bosses who are powerful enough to challenge even the most veteran heroes. The resistance level Legendary was introduced in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, as a designation for supremely powerful, unique monstrosities. But what should one keep in mind when designing such an individual?

A FINAL SHOWDOWN can be frightfully dull, and boring, and completely... Completely wonderful! Our own history of roleplaying includes many examples of amazing confrontations, which remain as vivid memories of situations when we together overcame insurmountable odds and achieved a common goal – memories that even now, decades later, can be brought up in various contexts. But there have also been showdowns that were less successful, where adventures or entire campaigns left a somewhat bitter taste in the mouth because of an anticlimactic ending.

Although the Game Master can (and should) never be dictatorial in how the adventure's scenes are portrayed, we would like to offer some advice on how *Symbaroum's* bosses can be designed to make the climax as entertaining, dramatic and memorable as possible.

Basic Principles

WE BELIEVE A final boss, particularly a Legendary one, should be absolutely lethal, but not particularly difficult to beat, at least not once the player characters have figured out its weakness. The reason for this is that the final confrontation should be thrilling and exciting, and not too long

– every die roll should feel important, risky and decisive. Before taking a closer look at how this can be achieved, we would like to establish another couple of basic premises.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER

A dragon, cryptwalker or giant arch troll should all be perfectly suitable as final bosses in Symbaroum, but if you want to give your players a truly unforgettable experience, a set of generic stats will probably not be enough. Give the creature a name and a backstory; let it be mentioned in legends, depicted in ancient mosaics, and perhaps surrounded by impossible rumors about it being *"utterly invulnerable," "older than Creation itself,"* or *"the daughter of the World Serpent and a forgotten, blight born Huldra."*

It should also have a striking personality and appearance. Legendary monsters are often described as arrogant and malevolent, or at least egotistical. But what would happen if the creature that must be defeated believes itself to be a force for good, and views the player characters as the henchmen of evil (e.g. mankind)? What would the confrontation be like if the beast was actually afraid of the player characters and tried to negotiate a peaceful solution? These examples may be exaggerated, but it will definitely be a richer experience if the creature deviates from what is expected, in one way or another – perhaps it is surprisingly courteous, turns out to have a dark sense of humor, repeats the last word of every phrase it (or the player characters) speaks, has a rattling cough, or mixes flattery with brutally phrased threats.

As for appearance, it does not have to be something big or mechanically significant; it can be quite enough for the dragon, cryptwalker or arch troll to have an unsightly scar, a missing fang, or a noticeable limp. One can also combine this distinctive feature with an actual weakness that the players may exploit – perhaps it has one milky white, blind eye, and has trouble defending itself from that side (i.e. it is easier to hit); perhaps there is a patch on its body that is not covered by scales or thick monster skin (i.e. the player characters can target that spot, in which case it is more difficult to hit, but attacks that do hit ignore *Armor*)?

DIFFERENT CHALLENGE

The confrontation itself should pose a new type of challenge for the player characters. It could be something that is possible to predict and prepare for, or a specific feature that only becomes evident once the battle has begun. It is of course difficult to create completely new challenges for every climax, since there is a limited number of abilities and traits. Rather, it is a question of putting together new combinations that force the players to think and adapt their characters' tactics. Table 45 lists a number of traits and abilities that can bring an element of surprise to the gaming table, if added to an otherwise standardized set of characteristics. Furthermore, the table can probably work well as inspiration when creating a new kind of adversary from scratch.

Another way of generating unexpected challenges is to create your own abilities, traits or powers; you can build on existing ones by adding a grandmaster level. Examples of the latter can actually be found in adventures published by us at Free League – the eternity elf Ka'eroan in *Wrath of the Warden* who is *Exceptionally Accurate* (grandmaster) and therefore has 19 in that attribute, and the keeper Miralba in *Mother of Darkness* who is a grandmaster of *Shapeshift* and therefore has level II in the traits *Armored, Natural Weapons, Regeneration* and *Robust* while in animal form.

As Game Master you should absolutely not be afraid to be creative in this way, but consideration is always a good thing – at least if you do not want some angry players on your hands. First of all, no individual creature should have more than a couple of unique abilities or grandmaster levels; these should be that "little extra" that makes the encounter a special experience. Secondly, all new

The Archetypes' Tactics

HUNTER
Keeps its distance from the player characters and uses ranged attacks.

WARRIOR
Tries to draw the player characters into melee,

MYSTIC
Keeps its distance while trying to bind the player characters or damage them in groups, or heal its allies.

ROGUE
Moves around the battlefield to use or create opportunities to strike from *Advantage*.

Table 45: Surprising Features

ABILITY/TRAIT	EFFECT
Acrobatics/Leap/Teleport	The creature can withdraw from melee combat without triggering free attacks
Avenging Successor/ Companions/Summoner	The creature has or can summon allies
Carapace/Rune Tattoo	The creature has additional *Armor*
Deadly Breath/Grappling Tongue/Poison Spit	The creature can attack at range
Enthrall/Gravely Cold/ Paralyzing Poison	The creature can cause a PC to lose actions
Equestrian/Tunneler/ Wings	The creature can perform sweeping attacks without getting stuck in melee combat
Feat of Strength/Sturdy	The creature has extra *Toughness*
Invisibility	The creature cannot be seen by normal means
Many-headed/Swift	The creature has extra attacks
Metamorphosis	The creature can surprise in many ways
Mystical Resistance	The creature is not easily affected by mystical powers

Table 46: Weak Spots

WEAKNESS	EXAMPLE EFFECT
Allergy	The creature takes double damage from poison if the player characters add a certain (rare!) substance and pass a *Cunning* test with *Alchemy*
Death-defying	The frenzied creature focuses entirely on offense and is therefore very easy to hit
Gap	The creature's natural armor has gaps, soft spots, or similar where its *Armor* is lower or even non-existent; these can be targeted, but are harder to hit (–3 to –8)
Hypersensitivity	The creature's *Armor* counts as halved against a certain type of damage (fire, acid, sanctified weapons or holy energies)
Phobia	The creature has a phobia of a certain phenomenon, item, element, etcetera; every turn the object of fear is present, the creature is distracted and has two chances to fail when performing active actions
Sledgehammer	The creature's attacks are relatively inaccurate, but deal immense damage on a successful hit
Slow	The creature's attacks count as having the quality Unwieldy; it may also have the burden *Slow*
Weak-willed	Its low *Resolute* makes the creature relatively easy to affect with mystical powers when it defends itself with said attribute

creations should be playtested a few times before they are put into play. And never forget that your job as Game Master is to create fun and exciting encounters – not defeat the player characters!

MODERATELY IMPOSSIBLE

It will not be much fun if the final boss is defeated in a single blow; nor if it cannot be harmed or seems capable of taking an infinite amount of punishment. The same goes for the creature's attacks – there must be a chance to avoid getting hit as well as to survive an attack that does hit. In roleplaying games, encounters are ultimately decided by die rolls, but that does not stop the Game Master from trying to strike a good balance in relation to the player characters' combat efficiency and competencies.

In line with the reasoning about the creation of monsters in the *Symbaroum Monster Codex* (page 174–177), the game's archetypes – Hunter, Warrior, Mystic, Rogue – can be a good starting point in this context. These archetypes represent different roles in combat situations, as described in the sidebar on page 119, and a worthy end boss of Legendary resistance should at least have mastered two of these roles. The point is that it can choose between two different attack strategies and thereby adapt to the player characters' tactics. It must also be quite difficult but not impossible to kill – it could be hard to hit, have lots of *Armor*, and/or high *Toughness*, but preferably not all three.

Even a boss must have some kind of weakness, offensively as well as defensively. Or rather, there must be strategies it cannot counter with abilities or traits – a type of damage that affects it the same way it affects everyone else; some form of tactic, item or elixir that allows a person to survive its most fearsome attack. The player characters should either be able to figure these (relative) weaknesses out in advance, for example through investigations or conversations with the creature's previous victims, or during the fight, with the help of the *Beast Lore* ability.

Table 46 lists some examples of weak spots the Game Master may use as-is or as inspiration in creating new ones.

Official End Bosses

The reasoning set out in this chapter explains why we are always urging Game Masters to adjust the enemies in predesigned adventures to suit their particular gaming group. The author of a predesigned adventure can never take into account all possible combinations of player character types and experience levels, which is why it is always up to the Game Master to think things through and add, subtract or adjust.

Living Legends

THE CREATURES FEATURED in this section are based on generic adversaries described in the *Core Rulebook* and *Monster Codex*, but expanded to fit the properties of Legendary resistance – they are created as if they had between 600 and 1200 *Experience* points to spend on abilities, powers and traits.

In addition to a brief backstory we have provided each creature with a few distinctive features, a grandmaster level, an unexpected ability and a weakness. As always you are not only free to change or add to our descriptions as you see fit – you are expected to make adjustments, not least in relation to the style and capacity of your players' characters!

THE LEGENDARY CRYPTWALKER

In the darkness of northern Davokar, the spirit of Queen Serala-Han Urel still lingers in the former high seat of her once flourishing realm. She and her people were utterly massacred by the armies of Symbar, and all that remains of her being is bitterness, anger and a thirst for revenge, with one exception – she still cherishes her memories of the land she and her ancestors established and developed.

Features: Besides being unnaturally big for a human, the spirit has a fist-sized hole just below her jugular and is covered by glowing blue tattoos. The queen will come to her senses if anyone

Queen Serala-Han Urel is ready to face any adventurer bold enough to infringe on her ruined citadel.

mentions her realm (Ureld), which means she can be negotiated with (requires *Loremaster* at master level).

Grandmaster Level: The grandmaster level of *Two-handed Force* gives Serala-Han an extra attack with the backswing, even if the initial attack hits its target. The master level's active armor-breaking effect applies to both attacks, should she decide to use it.

Unexpected Ability: Serala-Han Urel is *Robust*, which according to legend is a result of her being descended from the ice giants of the uttermost north. She also has the ability to spew out the furious vengefulness that dominates her, as a gust of corrupting energy.

Weakness: The queen's only real weakness is her lingering love for her old realm, Ureld. Those who convincingly flatter her for her achievements *[Persuasive←Resolute]* may be allowed to leave the palace ruin alive. And if someone uses stories and fabricated evidence to convince her that a rightful heir to the throne of Ureld has returned *[Persuasive←Resolute+5]*, she will finally be at peace and leave the living world forever.

SERALA-HAN UREL			
Race	Spirit		
Resistance	Legendary		
Traits	*Corrupting Attack* (III), *Deadly Breath* (III, corruption), *Gravely Cold* (III), *Manifestation* (III), *Robust* (II), *Spirit Form* (III)		
Accurate 10 (0), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 7 (+3), **Persuasive** 10 (0), **Quick** 14 (–4), **Resolute** 16 (–6), **Strong** 18 (–8), **Vigilant** 5 (+5)			
Abilities	*Exceptionally Quick* (master), *Exceptionally Resolute* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Feat of Strength* (master), *Iron Fist* (master), *Recovery* (master), *Rune Tattoo** (master), *Two-handed Force* (grandmaster)		
Weapons, Strong	Double Axe (deep impact), two attacks at the same target 16/11 (+2 after *Toughness* has been reduced to half), ignores *Armor*		
Armor	5 (*Robust*, *Rune Tattoo*); only takes damage from mystical powers and magical weapons, which do half damage; regenerates 1 *Toughness* per turn		
Defense	–1		
Toughness	23	**Pain Threshold**	–
Shadow	Like a clear night sky, with faint lights that only accentuate the overpowering darkness (thoroughly corrupt)		
Tactics: The queen makes full use of her manifestation ability, attacking physically while remaining immaterial in all other respects. She likes to unleash a storm of corruption before she starts swinging her double axe, first at enemies who have not been affected by the *Gravely Cold* trait, then at mystics and warriors with magical weapons.			

* Always active on all levels simultaneously since she is already thoroughly corrupt.

THE LEGENDARY DRAGON

Sakofal the Slaughterer is briefly mentioned in the eBook *Symbaroum – Adventure Locations* and in *Symbar – Mother of Darkness*. Unlike the other dragon who terrorized ancient Symbaroum, Fofar the Destroyer, Sakofal resisted the temptation to let himself be "exalted" (i.e. blight born) by Symbar's Theourgs. Instead he has long been trapped in hibernation by the lulling melodies of the Iron Pact; now he has woken, emaciated and famished like never before.

Features: So thin that the ribs, joints and cheek bones bulge or ridge the emerald-scaled skin.

Grandmaster Level: The dragon's desperate hunger and wish to regain his former strength manifests itself in the ability *Exceptionally Resolute* (grandmaster)

Unexpected Ability: The *Wrecker* trait at master level allows Sakofal to raze buildings with his claws and jaws, which in turn makes it difficult to seek shelter from the monster – especially as his *Life Sense* (master) also makes it possible to sense living creatures through walls or even several meters of soil.

Weakness: Sakofal is ferociously hungry and therefore overly aggressive and reckless – counts as *Berserker* (novice), which makes him relatively easy to hit. As a result of the long hibernation he has also lost contact with his race, which has robbed him of the trait *Wisdom of the Ages*.

SAKOFAL THE SLAUGHTERER	
Race	Beast (reptiles)
Resistance	Legendary

Traits	*Armored* (III), *Colossal* (II), *Deadly Breath* (III), *Devour* (III), *Life Sense* (III), *Long-lived*, *Natural Weapon* (III), *Robust* (III), *Sturdy* (II), *Wings* (III), *Wrecker* (III)
Accurate 7 (+3), **Cunning** 9 (+1), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 11 (–1), **Quick** 10 (0), **Resolute** 17 (–7), **Strong** 18 (–8), **Vigilant** 10 (0)	
Abilities	*Berserker* (novice), *Exceptionally Resolute* (grandmaster), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Iron Fist* (master), *Natural Warrior* (master), *Steadfast* (master)
Weapons, Strong	Bite 20 (long), or two attacks at the same target 18/14
Armor	Scales 8
Defense	+9
Toughness	36 **Pain Threshold** 9
Shadow	Shiny dark green, like an uncut emerald in the sharpest sunlight (corruption: 0)

Tactics: Sakofal descends like a storm on his enemies, performing two sweeping attacks at the same target; a hit gives him the chance to immediately devour the target as a reaction *[Strong←Strong]*. If the enemies are many and clustered together he may attempt a fire attack, but with less chance of hitting anyone (*Accurate*).

THE LEGENDARY ARCH TROLL

The legend of the arch troll Uhux is well known throughout the Davokar region. The monster has been terrorizing everything and everyone for centuries, and the fact that he has not been seen in almost a decade only fuels the fantasies of barbarians and Ambrians. Some say he is in the Yonderworld, fattening himself for a war campaign to wipe out humanity; those with more knowledge about the troll life cycle assume he is undergoing his fourth hibernation to return even bigger, stronger and hungrier than ever.

However, the truth is that Uhux was killed eight years ago by the war hero Vojondan of Vajvod, who also died from his wounds, alone in the depths of Davokar. Unfortunately, the story of Uhux did not end there, as the darkness in his soul raised him as undead half a decade later. Now he is on his way back, heading southwest, toward barbarian settlements and Ambrian outposts alike...

Features: The upper part of Uhux's skull is split, as if struck with a great axe, and yellowish, puss-like ooze constantly runs down his neck and face.

Grandmaster Level: With the grandmaster level of *Iron Fist*, Uhux deals 1D10 (+5) damage on all his attacks, as a Passive action.

Unexpected Ability: Uhux is undead, and one effect of the undead condition is that he exudes toxic substances such as ooze and fumes – he has the traits *Poisonous* and *Harmful Aura*.

Weakness: Some witches and elves know that Uhux is hypersensitive to willow plants and holy energies – sanctified weapons made of willow (e.g. arrows, spears, wooden staves) have the quality Blunt, but the arch troll's natural protection (from *Armored*, *Berserker* and *Robust*) against such attacks is reduced by half and the damage sustained cannot be regenerated.

UHUX	
Race	Undead (Troll)
Resistance	Legendary
Traits	*Armored* (III), *Enthrall* (III), *Harmful Aura* (III, poisonous), *Long-lived*, *Natural Weapon* (III), *Poisonous* (III), *Regeneration* (III), *Robust* (III), *Undead* (III)
Accurate 11 (–1), **Cunning** 10 (0), **Discreet** 5 (+5), **Persuasive** 9 (+1), **Quick** 7 (+3), **Resolute** 16 (–6), **Strong** 18 (–8), **Vigilant** 10 (0)	
Abilities	*Alchemy* (master), *Berserker* (master), *Exceptionally Resolute* (master), *Exceptionally Strong* (master), *Iron Fist* (grandmaster), *Natural Warrior* (master)
Weapons, Strong	Claws 21 (Long), two attacks at the same target and poison damage 4 for 4 turns; *Harmful Aura* within melee range, damage 4 per turn (ignores *Armor*)
Armor	Troll skin 10; regenerates 4 *Toughness*/turn, except damage from holy weapons; half damage according to *Undead* II
Defense	+7
Toughness	18 **Pain Threshold** –
Shadow	Bluish red, like the anoxic blood of the deepest veins (thoroughly corrupt)

Tactics: Uhux lumbers into battle surrounded by his poisonous fumes, humming a somber melody that enthralls everyone within earshot. Then he lets his claws sing until there is no one left to hear their bloody song.

t was only us left, me and the geezers, Master Iokum and his foggy old historian, Aneas. The latter would probably not live much longer; bitten in the abdomen by a hunger wolf, he hung between his friend and the staff he had borrowed. Still, I heard him chuckle in delight.

The Chalice of Mesamor. It had cost the lives of nine companions and four carriers, but there it was – not hidden in the Underworld as Aneas's tomes had suggested, but on the surface, inside an overgrown ruin from the early days of Symbaroum.

I followed my expedition leaders to the podium. The fluid filling the embedded silver basin of the giant chalice was clear as rain water; maybe it gave off a faint shimmer, or the basin reflected the weak rays falling through cracks in the chamber's ceiling? Either way, even I could sense the power radiating from the artifact, like a heat against the skin.

The historian dropped his staff and fell forward, finding support by placing both trembling hands against the rugged stone. He widened his stance to find balance before releasing the grip, cupping his hands, then filling them with fluid and raising it to his lips. He drank. Two deep gulps.

Slowly, slowly Aneas turned around. Smiling. Blissfully smiling.

But then he flinched, eyes widening. His jaw dropped and a moan of torment rose from his wide-open mouth.

I had seen that reaction before, so I turned to escape, leaving everything behind without a second thought or backwards glance. But not Master Iokum.

Maybe he also knew what was happening; maybe he was unable to abandon the friend he had brought to ruin? The sounds that the master made when the newly awakened abomination bit into his flesh did nothing to answer such questions...

SECTION 3:

THE REWARDS

Enhanced Rewards

THE PLAYERS' PARTICIPATION in and enthusiasm for the game depends largely on what rewards they gain from the sessions – things their characters acquire over the course of the game, but also the social boost from their friends around the gaming table. Here we delve into the former type of reward and offer tips on how you as a Game Master can balance the players' experiences of scarcity and abundance. Showering the player characters with rewards is just as unfulfilling (possibly even boring) as not giving them enough.

Blissfully unaware, Master Iokum and his friend Aneas wander towards certain death (see page 124).

A FUNDAMENTAL IDEA for the guidelines in this chapter is that rewards in play must be adapted to the individual player – what one person likes may not appeal to another, and vice versa.

As acting Game Master, you have to really know your gaming group well, and make sure to use that knowledge to tailor the rewards to the players and their characters.

The Relative Value of Rewards

ONE MIGHT SAY that *Symbaroum* has a floating exchange rate between thaler and *Experience*, and this is a deliberate design premise. It is up to the Game Master to appraise and balance rewards, with the help of the gaming group who, through their reactions, will provide feedback to the Game Master. Together you must try to figure out what is a reasonable level of reward to keep the game interesting.

The *Symbaroum Core Rulebook* offers guidelines for the distribution of *Experience*, but not treasures. Here we will try to explain how *Experience* and

other rewards are interconnected, on the basis of an adventuring career as the rewards interact a bit differently over time. The system is not strictly mathematical, but should provide Game Masters who want it with a tool for comparing different types of rewards. Just remember that it is ultimately the players who decide what something is really worth. *"The price is what you pay, the value is what you get,"* as the saying goes.

STARTING POINT

Newly created player characters start out with 50 *Experience* and 5 thaler, possibly with the amount of thaler modified by the traits/boons *Privileged* and *Pariah*.

It goes without saying that the game will provide more money than *Experience*, and that the first improvements to the player characters will likely come from equipment rather than enhanced abilities. It is simply cheaper to buy a weapon with +1 chance to hit (the quality Precise) than to accumulate enough experience to increase *Accurate* by +1 (the *Exceptional Attribute* ability).

So, for inexperienced characters, monetary rewards are particularly effective in quickly increasing the group's combat capability – thaler

Boons as Rewards

- Beast Tongue
- Blood Ties
- Dark Blood
- Enterprise
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Hideouts
- Pet
- Servant
- Soulmate

to invest in equipment, elixirs, and what is referred to in the *Advanced Player's Guide* as Lesser Artifacts. Mystical artifacts are obviously attractive, but it is by no means certain that newly created characters will find any that are worth investing *Experience* in (i.e. binding to) – mystical artifacts are often good if they match a player character's specialty, but less so if they do not.

MID-CAREER

Player characters who have been adventuring for a while have usually purchased the ordinary equipment they want, and started to obtain weapons, armor, and items with qualities that match their abilities. The players have also started to discover another aspect of *Symbaroum's* rules: there are clear limits on how much they can improve their stats through equipment, and doing so quickly becomes very expensive. Consequently, the urge to spend thaler usually passes after a while; the value of additional stat bonuses is outweighed by the cost in coin.

Now *Experience* comes into play, in the form of new (or higher levels of old) abilities. The gaming group has no doubt gotten their hands on a number of artifacts as well, some of which are well-suited to certain characters; in that case the group's capability is increased.

OLD HEROES

Experienced player characters are expected to have weapons, armor, and other equipment (Lesser Artifacts, etc.) that synergize with their abilities and make them strong in their specialties. They have probably amassed plenty of thaler as well, since money has a clear but limited ability to improve player characters after a certain point. Elixirs are still viable, but they are so cheap anyway that they will not ruin successful adventurers financially.

So, money will be piling up unless the player characters find other uses for it, for example investing in businesses, estates, fiefs, and so on. Artifacts (Lesser and Greater) are hard currency – they become particularly interesting as the gaming group has likely picked up a bunch of them by now, and every player character should find at least one worth binding to.

Story-wise there is also an opening for social rewards at this point. The player characters are individually competent and have undoubtedly made their mark on the world in a way that has caught the eye of the world's leading figures. Offering the player characters high-ranking positions or some land to rule is a natural development that facilitates interesting gameplay, as the described under the header Princes of the Land below.

Enriching Optional Rules

THE SYMBAROUM GAME'S modular design encourages gaming groups to adjust the rules as they see fit, and many of the new mechanics presented in various supplements released after the *Core Rulebook* are formulated as optional, or alternative, rules.

Several of these mechanics can, if the gaming group decides to apply them, be used to reward the characters and their players with other things than experience and valuables.

BOONS AS REWARDS

Boons and burdens are introduced in the *Advanced Player's Guide*, partly as an extension of traits for player characters, partly as a way of adding flavor to them without the complexity that comes with abilities. Many boons work well as rewards, and affect both the story and a character's stats. Since the cost is easily calculated, so is the value: a boon costs 5 *Experience* to purchase and is therefore worth the same.

But here the Game Master will have to be careful, as boons will change the player character significantly, and if used as a reward the boon should also be perceived as such by the player who receives it. Instead of offering a specific boon, the Game Master can talk to the player about which boon might suit the character.

BURDENS AS REWARDS

Offering burdens as rewards may seem counterintuitive, but done correctly it is not a bad idea at all. Handing out burdens after an adventure can be a good way of acknowledging that the player characters have been through a tough experience that left its mark on them. Another effect is of course that burdens grant *Experience*, which the players can use as they please.

Once again it is a matter of offering, not imposing, at least if the burden is meant as a reward. The Game Master can ask the gaming group which burden(s) they want, with reference to the fact that they just went through a series of traumatic events, and then let the players explain which burdens they have gained and why. Burdens used in this way grant an extra five points of *Experience* in addition to those gained from the scenes, and thus become an accelerator for the characters' ability progression.

THE SECRETS OF THE MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

The *Advanced Player's Guide* presents secrets kept by the various mystical traditions (see page 107), and these are definitely appropriate as rewards. Each tradition's secret can be regarded as a small reward, numerically speaking, but can be very atmospheric – the Grandmaster takes a player character aside and initiates her into the secrets of his tradition, in return for everything the character has done.

A greater, more valuable reward is to give a player character access to the forbidden secrets of all the traditions through the boon *Forbidden Knowledge* (page 53 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*). The value of a specific secret is equivalent to one point of *Experience*, which of course makes their combined value (the boon *Forbidden Knowledge*) 5 *Experience*.

PACT MAKING

The *Advanced Player's Guide* has an alternative rule for pact making (see page 104), and it is a goldmine of rewards that can add depth to the story and be valuable to the player character. It is difficult to say what the pact is worth in itself, since it provides the character with *Experience* but also corruption, and forces her to pursue one of the power's goals.

MONSTROUS TRAITS FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

The alternative rule for monstrous traits described in the *Core Rulebook* (page 179) has already been implemented in the form of the boons *Blood Ties* and *Dark Blood* (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 52 and 53, respectively). There are deep and dark stories to be found here, but also a couple of mechanical pitfalls: combining monstrous traits with other abilities can make player characters very powerful indeed. This does not have to be a problem, but can be difficult to manage for Game Masters who have not already thought it through.

When handled correctly this type of rewards can greatly enrich the game, as it relates in a concrete way to the conflict between civilization and nature, which is the central theme of *Symbaroum* – in a way, the player character's body and mind is caught in the middle of this conflict, which is an excellent basis for drama and intrigue.

For advice on how to handle any mechanical downsides of this, see the Adventures for Heroes section where mechanical imbalances are discussed (page 31).

PRINCES OF THE LAND

A potentially game changing reward is to give the player characters their own domain to manage. Suddenly the characters have acquired something that gives them status and also serves as an adventure generator – the adventures come to the player characters, instead of them having to run around in search of danger and rewards. Domains also tend to eat into the player characters' unused wealth, when they can no longer find any interesting equipment to spend it on.

A domain's value can be calculated in thaler, since a well-managed one generates income. But this kind of reward is so unique that it is best seen as a way of changing the overall style of the game to present experienced characters with new challenges. It is technically possible to provide player characters with a domain and keep going as usual, only with a fancy title and an additional stream of income that is handled in between gaming sessions. This removes one of the most interesting dimensions of the reward – the adventure generator – but is certainly doable, and for some gaming groups or players, the title and the thought of being a ruler is more rewarding than actually having to deal with the hassle of ruling.

How to mechanically handle the ownership of a domain is described in detail on page 76–81 and, depending on how the gaming group wants the game to develop, in the section on Troupe Play starting on page 29.

CREATING GREATER ARTIFACTS AS REWARDS

Creating their own greater artifact is probably a dream for many players, and the Game Master can give them that opportunity in the form of a reward – perhaps the gaming group finds a creation ceremony carved into a set of heavy stone tablets? Working out the artifact's powers is a fun challenge in itself, and its worth in thaler, time, or whatever else, is set by the Game Master. This is also a potential adventure generator – perhaps the player characters have to acquire specific ingredients or gain access to a dangerous and remote location in order to perform the ceremony?

The value of this reward depends entirely on the players and how powerful the Game Master allows the artifact to be. See the chapter on Creating Greater Artifacts (page 131) for principles and guidelines on designing the artifact in questions. You can draw inspiration from (or simply copy) the artifacts described in the Artifacts section on page 132, or from artifacts presented in previously published adventures.

Burdens as Rewards

- Addiction
- Arch Enemy
- Bestial
- Dark Secret
- Elderly
- Nightmares
- Protégé
- Sickly
- Wanted

Traditional Treasures

In a game like Symbaroum, where much of the fun comes from exploring ancient ruins in search of valuables and knowledge, there is every reason to think carefully about what items the player characters might find. Coins and gems are all well and good, but even the discovery of such traditional finds can make one's heart beat a bit faster if provided with a little twist or a quaint detail.

For example, the coins could have a unique motif depicting something unexpected like a daemon's face or a bull's head, or be made of colored or otherwise unusual material – metal, crystal, (gem) stone, or reptilian hide. The same goes for the jewels, which should preferably be uncommon in terms of their cut and color, or carved in the shape of figures like animals, plants, or even humans.

Then coins and gems can of course be switched for other types of objects of equivalent value. In official *Symbaroum* supplements we have introduced something called Debris, Curiosities, and Mystical Treasures. The first category is a kind of substitute for traditional treasures – instead of a cache of 1D10 silver coins the player character finds shards of a painted vase, which can be sold at the equivalent price.

The idea is to make the digging, rummaging, and hacking in the ruins of Davokar more interesting; although the value of all Curiosities is the same (10+1D10 thaler), the treasure hunter can never know exactly what she is going to find. Below are some simple tips for Game Masters wishing to create their own Curiosities and Mystical Treasures, preferably designed to be unearthed in a specific location.

Curiosities

Start by considering who once inhabited the location. What did they live off? What level of development characterized their culture? What did they worship? Who was their ruler(s)? All such questions can provide inspiration for designing so called Curiosities.

Simply put, a Curiosity is an item that is still undamaged/functional and whose design has a story to tell. It could be an ornament, tool, article of clothing, toy, or some other everyday object; what matters is that the Curiosity is special, ideally in a way that says something about how the cultural beings of old lived, thought, and acted.

The story the item tells is best left vague, subject to interpretation and fantasies rather than too on the nose. Hints are usually enough to stoke a listener's, reader's, or (in this case) player's imagination. And as we always say: *"pre-written descriptions will never feel as interesting as the receiver's own ideas or mental images."* Mention a few noteworthy features and let the players' imaginations do the rest!

Mystical Treasures

One step above Curiosities on every treasure hunter's wish list are so called Mystical Treasures. When creating these, the same general rule applies as for Curiosities: the history they tell should say something about the people who created and used them, but this information should be expressed through symbols and hints rather than actual descriptions.

Mechanically, a Mystical Treasure should be roughly as powerful as a Lesser Artifact (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 123); they are also comparable to Boons and Elixirs, without necessarily having the same mechanical effect – they have magical properties of a more abstract nature that are rarely useful in traditional combat or problem solving. One example is a flower vase in which plants never age (neither withering, blossoming, nor producing fruit), another is a notebook whose notes are only visible to the writer.

In cases where a Mystical Treasure's effect is useful during tough challenges, we recommend that you provide it with a defect or an element of risk – it presents a clear advantage, but if misfortune strikes, the item's effect results in a negative modifier for one type of activity and a bonus for another. An example could be a bell that rings when an abomination is nearby but risks attracting the blight beast's attention, or a monocle that when used adds +3 to *Vigilant* for tracking in the wilderness, but –1 for detecting dangers in the area.

The Game's Treasure Chambers

Those who want examples of Curiosities and Mystical Treasures can find tables on pages 100–102 of this book, as well as in the *Adventure Pack 1* PDF. The latter can be purchased and downloaded wherever you buy other digital works produced by Free League, and includes both Curiosities and Mystical Treasures (pages 7–9). If that is not enough, the Davokar Game Master's Screen features some additional Curiosities that the characters can find during their wilderness expeditions.

Greater Artifacts

THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES principles and guidelines for Game Masters wishing to create their own greater artifacts; greater in the sense that they were made by ancient artifact crafters, an art long lost to modern day mystics who have to settle for lesser artifacts (the *Artifact Crafting* ability). The chapter also includes a section with new mystical artifacts, to be used as rewards or as a basis for homebrew adventures.

Creating Greater Artifacts

FOR A GREATER artifact to fit in mechanically it is important that it does not duplicate already existing abilities or powers, and that it is useful to everyone but particularly to those who have a certain ability. Furthermore, the artifact should be given a backstory that deepens the game world in an interesting way, so that conquering the artifact provides a way to explore the history of the world.

As always, the following should be seen as guidelines, not strict laws. A certain artifact may not comply with all three principles, but it is recommended that you try to fulfill at least two of them.

DO NOT DUPLICATE

Artifacts should endow the user with a unique power, an ability that cannot be acquired any other way; they should not be obvious copies of another ability, power, or trait. Mechanically speaking the difference may be subtle, but it should still be there, and if nothing else it should have a distinct aesthetic and feel.

That said, it is definitely worth looking at other abilities or powers when it comes to deciding what the artifact can do, finding a balanced mechanic, and in conjunction with this, setting a price in temporary corruption for using the decided upon power or powers.

If an artifact's power resembles an existing ability or mystical power, it may be a good idea to make it extra potent for those with a related ability. That way the artifact is not a direct substitute for an existing ability, but rather an enhancer of it.

GOOD FOR EVERYONE, BETTER FOR THOSE WITH THE RIGHT ABILITY

The artifact should ideally be useful to everyone, but particularly powerful for player characters with certain abilities. There are different ways of doing this: the artifact can have one power that is useful to everybody and a second one that cannot be used at all without a certain ability; or maybe it is the same power, but it is boosted if the user has the ability in question.

A more subtle version is that the power can be used by anyone, but reaches its full potential when combined with a certain ability. That way the artifact is not tied to a certain ability, but it is wise of the gaming group to put it in the hands of a characters who has the ability.

DEEPEN THE GAME WORLD

Artifacts dug up in ruins or torn from the dead hands of necromages are links to a more powerful past, when mystic were able to routinely create such things. In other words, the artifact is a great window to the game world's history.

When you as Game Master create an artifact, ask yourself what you want to say or highlight about the game world. How can this be tied to the artifact in question – its creation, a previous owner, or its most recently known fate? Since you know your gaming group, the artifact can answer specific questions they may have. You can also take the opportunity to emphasize a theme or phenomenon you want to focus on, for example the main conflict of the adventure or campaign you are playing.

THE PRICE OF THE ARTIFACT

Binding the artifact to oneself costs 1 *Experience*, which means the character has already paid in a valuable currency. And then the artifact's power has a price in the form of temporary corruption. The cost of activating a power depends on its effect, and here it is perfectly reasonable to compare it to other powers and abilities that cost temporary corruption.

The "price levels" are 1, 1D4, 1D6, or 1D8 temporary corruption, except in rare cases where powers do not generate corruption:

Free: the power is aesthetically pleasing, but useless in combat.
1 Corruption: the power is useful but not particularly powerful, and is very unlikely to affect the outcome of combat.
1D4 Corruption: the artifact's power is comparable to a mystical power at novice level.
1D6 Corruption: the artifact's power is comparable to a mystical power at adept level.
1D8 Corruption: the artifact's power is comparable to a mystical power at master level.

Artifacts

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, mystics have bound spirits and power to objects, and thus created what today are known as artifacts. Each artifact is an expression of the will of the bound power, and trying to wield such power is never without consequence. In other words, all artifacts are associated with risk – especially for users who are unaccustomed to wielding items charged with mystical energies.

The crafting of artifacts is very rare these days, partly because so many rituals for making them have been lost over the centuries, but also because the price of creating them is high. Binding powerful spirits is dangerous, especially now that the Eternal Night draws ever closer.

Finding an artifact can be the climax of an adventure and often the start of a new one. Each of the artifacts described in this section comes with one or multiple adventure set-ups, ranging from simple and small to utterly epic. Whether or not any of these plot hooks is used is entirely up to the Game Master; sometimes an artifact is an excellent starting point for a new chronicle, and sometimes you simply want to reward your players with a powerful item.

Here are twenty-seven artifacts the Game Master may use or draw inspiration from.

THE MAP OF ARGOND THE WANDERER

It is said that Argond the Wanderer was a learned explorer, but very little is known about him other than the fact that he created two artifacts: a tome of almost infinite – and highly unorganized – knowledge, and this pathfinding map.

The map is beautifully drawn but lends no clues about its creator, nor does it specify the year of its creation. It is very old, which is obvious even to uneducated observers: the forest of Davokar is missing. Sure, there are woods, mountains, and rivers, but none of the unbroken forest cover that today awaits those who wander north from Ambria. Ambria, by the way, does not exist either; the state of Lindaros (where Yndaros is currently located) is no more than a large village on the banks of the river Doudram, and northern Alberetor looks overgrown and virtually unpopulated. Karvosti is there, as are many of the more prominent structures found in the southern part of the great forest – many of them are not depicted as ruins, however, but presented in their original splendor. Scholars have therefore assumed that the map shows the world as it was in the century following the fall of Symbaroum, before the elves had planted all of Davokar, long before the High Chieftain established himself on Karvosti and Lindaros emerged as a major center of power.

The city of Symbar, or rather its ruins, is also absent on the map, which has led some to believe that the map's creator respected the taboo that the witches inherited from the elves: Symbar's location must be forgotten, as it is the cradle of corruption itself. But this may not be the case, as the map only shows the general area around its reader (the Game Master decides). Every night

the map changes as the master moves around. In other words, you cannot study northern Alberetor unless you are already in the Titans, nor see far north into Davokar unless you are already deep in the forest. So perhaps one just might see the city of Symbar if one goes far enough north with the map in hand.

No one knows how much of the world the map can actually show, and it would take very long expeditions to answer that question.

Right Path: A person who binds to the artifact can point to any location on the map and get an idea of how best to get there. But the map takes no account of anything that has happened in the 900 years since it was created, which might cause problems as a lot has changed in the Davokar region since then.

Also, anyone bound to the map can use it to avoid getting lost. But it takes a master with the *Loremaster* ability (novice) to understand when the map is showing a sector or path that has changed significantly. The loremaster makes a *Cunning* test to identify an alternative route to the destination and thus avoid obstacles in the terrain: corrupted nature, lindworm lairs, and similar stationary problems. However, the loremaster's wisdom does not protect against wandering creatures encountered along the way, or dangerous moving terrain such as blight mist.

Action: Free

Corruption: None

Treasure Map: In the hands of someone with the *Loremaster* ability, the map can be used to locate an untouched ruin. The power requires one hour's intense study of the map as well as a *Cunning* test to locate a ruin site. To find a good route, one must use the power Right Path. It is up to the Game Master to decide which ruin it is, what creatures are there, and what treasures it hides. What is clear is that the ruin has not yet been plundered by treasure hunters.

Action: As a ritual

Corruption: None

Adventure Set-up

Nightpitch's annual treasure hunting contest is right around the corner, and the player characters are contacted by a former treasure hunter who claims to know where to find the pathfinding map of Argond the Wanderer. The veteran wants the characters to retrieve it and then use it to (hopefully) win the contest! Naturally, the retired treasure hunter wants a share of the prize money, but the player characters may keep the map – until a competitor finds out about their secret treasure hunting weapon.

ASHIKI'S TWIN BLADES

Ashiki was a famous changeling who grew up in the slums of Lindaros and took over one of its gangs through a mixture of cunning and violence. After being betrayed by one of her confidants, Ashiki took it upon herself to punish Lindaros' criminals and swept through the city in a veritable wave of murder. The wave came crashing to a halt when Ashiki took on the city's elite in pursuit of robbers and thieves. She was ferociously hunted down, caught, and publicly executed. Her two daggers were lost and remain so to this day.

Argond's Map and the Location of Symbar

The Game Master must decide whether the map can really show the way to the Symbarian capital of Symbar. Finding the city, and more importantly getting there, is one of the main challenges in the *Chronicle of the Throne of Thorns*, where the search for accurate directions is a central part of the various adventures. As already mentioned, there are good reasons why Argond's map may not show the way there, or worse still – show the way to a completely different place, as he did not want anyone to ever find the ruined heart of the empire.

If the Game Master so wishes, the map could instead explain how another group has made it to Symbar, and the player characters might find the map in the hands of some competitor or adversary they encounter among Symbar's ruins.

Gift of Shadows: When one of the daggers is used with the *Backstab* ability, the damage die is rolled twice and the best result stands.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1 per use

A Dance of Two: With both twin blades in hand, a person with *Twin Attack* can trigger a veritable shower of strikes, one dagger striking after the other like two siblings trying to outdo one another. The user can keep attacking a single target until one strike misses or the victim dies from its many wounds. Those who listen carefully can hear the daggers hiss with delight and competitiveness while the sibling rivalry is underway.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up
The player characters get their hands on one of Ashiki's daggers, which immediately attempts to send them on a search for its twin – through dreams, subtle suggestions, or similar means. Meanwhile the other dagger is doing the same, and their respective masters are inexorably drawn to each other.

The twins' goal is to incite a duel between the player character with the dagger and whoever has the other one. Both knives will giggle gleefully during the fight. It could be an epic clash if the main enemy of the adventure bears the other dagger, and a very tragic one if the person is a potential friend or someone the player characters sympathize with for philosophical reasons. A possible solution is for the player character to give their dagger to the opponent, but the master of the other dagger will not surrender willingly, consumed by the dagger's desire to fight in order to be reunited with its twin.

BUNEFER'S DEATH MASK

Bunefer was a warrior princess in the twilight years of Symbaroum. She died under elvish swords during the final battle of Symbar, but her servants managed to save her body and cast a traditional death mask of her lifeless face. The princess' sarcophagus was hidden in a pyramid of stacked enemy corpses, all slain by Bunefer's lance, and at the top of this macabre structure they left the death mask.

In the chaos that followed the downfall of Symbar, the mask was stolen from the pyramid. For a while it was worn by a robber chieftain named Iaresta, known for having conquered an area in western Davokar after a battle against the first High Chieftain of Karvosti, Serembar. Iaresta was caught and executed, after which the artifact was inherited by a witch who used it as a weapon against Davokar's growing darkness. When the witch disappeared in the depths of the forest, so did the death mask.

The death mask gives its master Bunefer's ability to find gaps in an enemy's armor, as well as her famed ability to paralyze enemies with her war cry.

Eye of the Needle: The death mask helps its master find gaps in the enemy's armor. Activating the power reduces all enemies' *Armor* by 1D4 against melee attacks, for the duration of the combat scene. This only applies to the mask's master and does not count as extra damage – unarmored targets take damage as usual.
Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4

A Thousand Needles: A master with the *Polearm Mastery* ability can use the mask to paralyze enemies with piercing screams. All enemies hit by the master's pole weapon must pass a *Resolute* test or lose their next combat action (the mask's master makes the roll).
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1 per scream from the mask

Adventure Set-up
Retrieving the death mask is a suitable challenge for a new or would-be witch, or a barbarian warrior of chieftain lineage. The player character's superior orders her to bring back the mask from its probable location, a ruin area. This is meant to test the player character, and is a way of rewarding a promising protégé.

DESDEMORGOS' ICOSAHEDRON

The demonologist Desdemorgos was a hunted man; both witch hunters and other demon worshippers wanted his head. To escape them he used a magic icosahedron he had obtained through unknown means – with his mystical powers he could step into the Yonderworld, and the icosahedron allowed him to stay there without being blight born.

This fist-sized icosahedron of black steel binds and protects against corruption. Its most obvious use is for traveling through blighted lands or combating creatures using corruption as a weapon.

Corruption Barrier: The master of the icosahedron gains complete protection against corruption that afflicts those who move through a certain area, for example in corrupted nature or the Yonderworld. For corruption used as a weapon (e.g. the trait *Corrupting Attack* or the mystical power *Black Breath*) the master must roll over the damaging corruption on 1D20 – if the outcome is higher the corruption has no effect; if the outcome is equal or less, the master is affected as usual.

The protection does not apply to sources of corruption the master chooses to use, such as binding/using artifacts or activating mystical powers.
Action: Reaction.
Corruption: None

Corruption Gatherer: A master with the *Sorcery* ability can absorb weaponized corruption and turn it against her enemies. For this to work the sorcerer must first protect herself against the attack, see Corruption Barrier – in which case the corruption is stored in the artifact.

The sorcerer can then spend this gathered corruption to lower the enemy's resistance to her own powers: each point spent gives the target –1 to *Resolute* when defending against the master's power. All points may be spent on the same power, but half of the amount spent (rounded up) also afflicts the sorcerer in the form of temporary corruption.

Corruption generated by the master herself (through the use of powers etc.) cannot be gathered this way, nor can corruption coming from the environment in general, like in corrupted nature or the Yonderworld.
Action: Free
Corruption: None when gathering corruption; on use the sorcerer is afflicted by half of the corruption spent.

Example: *The sorcerer Jagada has bound Desdemorgos' Icosahedron to herself and is hit by a monster with the trait Corrupting Attack. The attack deals 5 corruption. Jagada's player rolls 1D20 and needs a result higher than 5 to avoid the effect. She rolls 11 – the corruption barrier holds and Jagada suffers no corruption. This also means that the corruption is stored in the icosahedron, since Jagada has the Sorcery ability. She then uses the enemy's weapon against it: Jagada casts Bend Will on the monster. She spends all 5 points to lower the monster's Resolute by –5. She herself suffers 3 (5/2) temporary corruption, which her artifact cannot protect against.*

Adventure Set-up

The icosahedron is most appropriate for adventures where the player characters realize they must pass through a stretch of corrupted terrain and need the icosahedron to do so. Perhaps they must get their hands on both Desdemorgos' Icosahedron and Terrasma's Yondermirror (page 147) to reach a certain place in the Yonderworld? Suggestions on creating adventures and scenes set in the Yonderworld are found starting on page 41.

THE QUEEN MOTHER'S BANNER

This famous banner bears the coat of arms of House Kohinoor, the Flaming Pine. It was carried in the name of the queen mother by the greatest heroes in the fight against the Dark Lords and is heavily stained by their dried blood. It is said that her courage and strength rubbed off on others, which is revealed by the power of the banner when it is planted in the ground: the surrounding area is filled with an uplifting and protecting aura.

Skeptics believe the banner dates back much further than the Great War, all the way to Lindaros, or further still – which, if true, gives legitimacy to Queen Korinthia's claim on Ambria and parts of Davokar. Since the banner was lost during the final stages of the war, few scholars now living have had the privilege of studying it to determine its age.

Rally the Troops: When the person bound to the banner thrusts it into the ground, all allies within sight get one reroll per scene on a resistance test against any effect; this applies to *Defense* as well. Allies moving out of sight of the banner lose the effect, but those coming within sight of the banner gain it.

Allies who used the reroll cannot get another one during the same battle, regardless of whether the banner is replanted. Allies with *Steadfast* automatically succeed with activities covered by the ability, instead of rerolling them. The master of the banner does not have to stay within sight of the banner once it has been planted in the ground, but follows the same rules as everyone else regarding the reroll.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Restoration: A master with the *Leader* ability can make the banner radiate healing energies once it has been planted in the ground. All allies within sight recover 1D4 *Toughness*. Allies with the *Recovery* ability gain their level of healing instead, if it exceeds 1D4. If the master has and uses the *Leader* ability at adept or master level, Restoration can be activated as a reaction to those actions (e.g. Restoration does not cost an Active action of its own).
Action: Active (or Reaction if combined with *Leader*, adept or master level)
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

The most exciting adventure opportunity might be the banner's connection to House Kohinoor and the family's claim on Ambria, Davokar, and by extension, Symbar's Throne of Thorns. There are many stakeholders in that conflict, not least as part of the Chronicle of the Throne

of Thorns; House Kohinoor in particular, wants the banner to strengthen their legitimacy. Rivals of the crown – the Church of Dead Prios, the Black Cloaks, the Sovereign's Oath, and others – also want the banner, to discredit Korinthia's claim, or failing that, hide the artifact to keep it from her.

If the banner falls into the player characters' hands they will have great leverage to assert their own importance against nearly all other factions. The banner is also a potential ticket to face-to-face meetings with the most powerful people in Ambria: Commander Iakobo Vearra, the Grandmaster of Ordo Magica, and maybe even Queen Korinthia herself. The latter would be very interested in trading a piece of land (see Princes of the Land on page 129), or perhaps an artifact or two, for the banner.

ELI'S TROLL FLUTE

This troll flute is named after its current owner, a homeless child named Eli who wandered (and perhaps still wanders) the streets of Thistle Hold. The girl and her flute are famous because she plays the most breathtaking tunes on it, and she also serves as the most effective ratcatcher in town.

Sweet Music: The flute is accommodating and instructive, and even the least qualified musicians can play beautifully on it. A skilled musician can produce spellbinding tunes and be showered with both applause and jingling thaler.

The master of the flute can, once per adventure and with a successful *Persuasive* test, captivate an audience and receive 1D10 thaler (mostly in the form of shillings and ortegs) as payment for the experience. A master with the *Musician* boon makes the *Persuasive* test with a bonus from the boon, and also rolls twice to determine the money earned – the highest result stands.

Action: Special

Corruption: None

King of Beasts: A master with the *Troll Singing* ability (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 77) can use her music to lead and command beasts. All beasts of a certain type within earshot (if more than one type is present, the musician decides which to target) become neutral towards the musician and allow her and her friends to pass without interference.

Furthermore, a chain *[Persuasive←Resolute]* of beasts of the selected type can be made to follow and assist the musician for the duration of the effect. If the master has *Musician*, the bonus from the boon is added to *Persuasive* for this test. The musician must keep playing the whole time, which requires two hands as well as concentration; *[Resolute –damage]* breaks the concentration.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

Many different adventures can be built around Eli and her flute. Perhaps she is a human child raised by trolls who taught her the mystical tradition Troll Singing; perhaps she ran away, or maybe the trolls were slain by treasure hunters who "rescued" Eli? Or maybe the trolls sent her to Thistle Hold on some kind of mission, perhaps to keep an eye out for troll artifacts?

One possibility is that Eli shared blood with her adoptive parents and gained the Blood Ties boon (Long-lived), which in her case has slowed down her aging even as a child. She can therefore be much older than she looks and have the wisdom of a far older person.

Whoever Eli is, the player characters need her – or more specifically her flute's – help to pass through a place in Davokar or in/beneath the town that is teeming with beasts. Eli probably demands something in return for coming with them; perhaps she needs help taking back a troll artifact from some suitably dangerous person or group.

THE WRAITH MARK OF THE ETERNITY LEGION

A prominent unit in the Symbarian army was the Eternity Legion which, faithful to the emperor of Symbar, was sent to quell uprisings all around the empire. Their commander, Malakanu, gave his

greatest warriors a unit emblem of rusty iron, worn on a simple chain. The emblem allowed its master to fight on even after being struck down. This, as well as the rumor of the unit's outstanding ferocity, made them an effective tool in the hand of the emperor. But they were not entirely immortal, nor did they serve for eternity; the unit was thoroughly crushed by the Iron Pact during the final battle of Symbar, and the elves gathered their wraith marks and had them hidden away or destroyed. But a few marks escaped destruction, around the necks of fleeing legionaries or in the pockets of grave robbers.

Loyal in Death: The Wraith Mark of the Eternity Legion contains an impersonating spirit who rises over an unconscious, but not yet dead, master. The master rolls death tests as usual while the wraith fights on. A non-player character wearing the mark rolls death tests as if it was a player character, except that a player rolls the die.

The wraith must be defeated before the master can be attacked and it has the same stats as the master, with the addition of *Spirit Form* (I). It does not move more than a step from the fallen body, and attacks anyone within range who is not a friend of the mark's master.

Once defeated, the wraith disappears back into the wraith mark and will not return until the master wakes up and is struck down again. If the fallen warrior dies as a result of a failed death test, the wraith ceases to exist.

Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

The wraith mark is well suited as a trap on the road or a complication during another adventure. The player characters move through a tight passage with a fresh "corpse" inside, and as they examine or step over the dead body, the wraith rises and starts to fight. Alternatively, an important enemy could be in possession of a wraith mark, and when the player characters triumphantly fell their opponent a wraith rises in its stead!

FEUD CRYSTAL

The paranoid High Chieftain Boherg convinced his Huldra Kthelba to imbue this crystal with power, so the chieftain would be able to keep track of his many (real and imaginary) enemies. The feud crystal was later passed down from High Chieftain to High Chieftain, and eventually went missing under chieftain Sotorek's reign. It is said that the Huldra at the time, Eaba, took it because the High Chieftain had become so obsessed with the stone that no decisions were being made and everything else was being neglected. Its current whereabouts are unknown.

Enemies in the Walls: A person who binds herself to the feud crystal can list a number of enemies equal to half her *Vigilant* (rounded up), and use the crystal to get an idea of how far away they are. The master may add or remove enemies from the list, but the number of names can never exceed half her *Vigilant*. Furthermore, the enemies must be known by appearance and provided with names; designations like *"the gray woman"* or *"the one-eyed troll"* will suffice.

The feud crystal shows the listed enemies in different degrees of focus, depending on their physical proximity; a crystal clear enemy is potentially close enough to see, but hidden, disguised, or otherwise unnoticeable. The user has two chances to pass any tests aimed at finding such a nearby enemy, whether it be *Vigilant* tests or to activate finding powers or abilities.

A master struck by Sotorek's curse (see the power's corruption) must add another person as a named enemy, and strongly believes that everyone on the list is equally threatening. This new enemy is in addition to the *Vigilant*/2 number of names. The Game Master and the player must together come up with an interesting false enemy. The Game Master might also decide that it is in fact a hidden enemy, or let it turn into one over time, just to keep the player in a state of uncertainty... In any case, the player character is utterly convinced of the additional person's treacherous disposition.

Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4, and 1/20 chance of suffering Sotorek's curse on each use.

Look of Vengeance: A master with the ability *Sixth Sense* can attack crystal clear enemies (see Enemies in the Walls) as if they were standing right in front of her, with weapons, powers, or traits. The user does not need to find or see the enemy to make the attack, which is performed and defended against as usual.

Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4, and 1/10 chance of suffering Sotorek's curse.

Adventure Set-up

A player character ends up on the feud crystal's current list of enemies, rightly or wrongly – there are probably many possibilities of it being right, but it will likely be more interesting if the player character is wrongly placed on the list of a potential ally.

How the gaming group navigates this situation will be exciting, as they need the ally's help, but he or she (for unclear reasons) sees one of the characters as a deadly threat.

FUGLOMARU'S LIAR FIRE

Not all was darkness and sin in Symbaroum, at least according to the legend of Fuglomaru – a mystic who sought the light, and some say she found it. Her rune, a stylized sun with eight rays, has been found in several contexts (often mistaken for a spider or sun symbol), not least on the sun temple secured by the Templars east of Karvosti.

There has been speculation as to whether this really was Fuglomaru's own sign, or whether the sun even symbolizes an early and possibly persecuted order of sun worshippers in Symbar, where Fuglomaru was a prominent figure. That would explain the symbol's presence in other places, and that people seem to have worshipped or prayed to the symbol, before being hunted down and slaughtered by knights in black armor. Perhaps this forgotten sun order was composed of heretics (in the eyes of the Symbarians), and executed for their transgressions?

Mosaics also show the truth-thirsting fire bowl that bears Fuglomaru's name. Interpretations of the signs suggest that the fire bowl's flames burn those who lie, and cool or heal those who tell the truth. Such a fire bowl would certainly be coveted by some, and abhorred by others; the presence of such an artifact could hypothetically alter the political game at any court in the world.

Power of the Truth: Those who willingly put their hand in the flames will be burned if they are lying while the hand is in the fire; 1D6 damage per lie (ignores *Armor*). Lying means saying something the speaker herself does not believe, which may of course be an honest misunderstanding. A person telling the truth will find the flames cooling, even healing (cleanses the body of temporary corruption and heals 1D4 *Toughness*).

The master of the artifact is not affected by the power, and can lie freely with her hand in the flames.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Inquisition: Masters with the *Theurgy* ability can use the flames to makes someone tell the truth. The theurg points at someone within sight of the fire bowl and demands that the person tell the truth. Flames flare up around the person, and the effect is then the same as Power of the Truth.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up

The player characters find themselves before a prince who possesses the fire bowl and whom they must negotiate with to accomplish their mission.

The Game Master is free to introduce a potentially dark twist. The truth may be that the bowl contains a mind-reading power or daemon – maybe even the spirit of Fuglomaru – and that it is this entity who decides who is or is not burnt, rather than the truthfulness of what is said. What the power wants, or does not want, is up to the Game Master. It could be an early sun worshipper, a predecessor to the priests of Prios, contained in the bowl, and the question is what this power thinks of the various branches of the modern Sun Church. It could be a dark power from the deepest pools of corruption, seeking to conquer or simply divide, and perverting the truth to get there.

GIRAKOSH'S STEEL CIRCLE

According to legend, Girakosh was a troll-taken barbarian whose adoptive parents gave him a powerful throwing weapon: a rune-carved circle of razor-sharp steel. With this in hand he slew many of the trolls' enemies before he finally died of old age, weak as the human he was. The weapon was buried with its master, and stolen much later by grave robbers from Thistle Hold. These soon met a sudden and unexpected death as they were tracked down by trolls on their next expedition into the depths of the forest. But the steel circle had already been sold or gambled away, and is currently somewhere in the northern borderlands of Ambria.

Anyone intending to use the steel circle must cope with the risk that the trolls will come looking for it, and the master may have to consider striking a deal with the forgers of the weapon; surely there are common enemies who the artifact's master can fight with the trolls' blessing?

A person who has bound the artifact to herself can also use the throwing steel as a melee weapon, with stats as a dagger. For everyone else it is a throwing weapon only.

Return: The thrown steel circle returns to the master's hand, whether or not it hits its intended target. If the master is capable of throwing multiple steels per turn, the throwing steel can be used as many times as necessary.

Action: Free

Corruption: None

Steel Rain: A master with the *Steel Throw* ability can send the steel circle whirling across the battlefield, zigzagging between allies in search of enemy flesh. The power turns the attack into a chain of attacks (see page 130 in the *Core Rulebook* for an explanation of the term Chain) against enemies in view of the master. The steel returns to its master's hand after the attack.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

The steel circle introduces the player characters to the trolls' mission: to retrieve troll artifacts that have fallen into the wrong hands. Sooner or later whoever carries Girakosh's steel circle will attract the attention of the trolls and be tracked down.

The first encounter will likely be more about probing and investigative than violence, but the trolls are not averse to taking back their treasures by force. Player character who are grossly exploiting Davokar and its riches will be considered an enemy of the trolls, and encounters with trolls will mean combat. Character who are clearly acting in accordance with the witches or the Iron Pact will likely be allowed to keep the weapon, maybe even offered Blood Ties with the trolls to bring the parties together (see the Advanced Player's Guide, page 52).

Player characters balancing between respecting and exploiting Davokar must be tested before being considered worthy. The trolls start by examining them and go on to test the master and her allies by force of arms; the weak and foolish are struck down, but not killed. In that case the artifact is taken from the player character. If the master of the steel does well in combat, the trolls back down and return with an offer of blood ties, both as a gift and as a way of controlling the master.

HAFMUUL'S TRANSFORMATION GARMENTS

Hafmuul the Transformer was a particularly productive artifact crafter, probably active shortly before or after the fall of Symbaroum. The artifacts made by his hand show signs of an already diminished understanding of greater artifacts – defects and risks that previous generations of artifacts do not exhibit to the same degree. Hafmuul's main focus was transformations, and his life's goal was to create an artifact that allowed him to transform into anything he wanted. Whether he succeeded is unclear, but he did leave behind several artifacts focused around the theme of transformation, including the Baiagorn Coat, the Violing Cloak, and the Mare Gown. There are more of these garments, at least if the myth is to be believed, but these three are the only ones whose existence is certain.

Scholars claim to have found evidence that a person wearing all three of the aforementioned garments can assume the form of an even more powerful beast – combining them allows the master to transform into a massive aboar. What a master who wears even more of these transformation garments can turn into is a thought both frightening and exhilarating.

Some pundits also maintain that people using the transformation garments risk being trapped in the borrowed form – a symptom of degenerated artifact crafting. It is clear that the witches have a special affinity for these artifacts and can use them more effectively than others.

Frequent use of these garments comes with a risk. Anyone who transforms more frequently than once per day must roll 1D20. If the result is equal to or less than the number of transformations performed that day, the master is trapped in beast form. Over time (days, weeks) the master's mind will become more bestial. A person wishing to free a trapped master must perform the *Exorcism* ritual to separate the transformation garb from the master. The master's mind returns to normal after the same amount of time as she was trapped in the borrowed form. Killing the master is another way of separating artifact and user.

Flight of Violings: Many a violing lost its life to create this feather cloak, black and glistening green. The master can transform into a flock of violings (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 225) for one scene. For masters with the *Witchcraft* ability the trait *Swarm* counts as level II.

Action: Free

Corruption: 1D4

Bear Walk: Whoever wears this heavy baiagorn fur can assume the form of a mighty baiagorn for one scene (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 220). A user with the *Witchcraft* ability also gains the trait *Regeneration* (I). The transformation requires that the master suffers at least 1 damage from an enemy.

Action: Reaction, when the master takes at least 1 damage from an enemy.

Corruption: 1D4

Path of the Mare Cat: A person wearing this beautiful mare cat tunic can transform into a mare cat (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 220). The transformation lasts for one scene. Masters with the *Witchcraft* ability also gain the monstrous trait *Poisonous* (II).
Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4

Way of the Hog: Anyone wearing all three transformation garments – the Baiagorn Coat, the Violing Cloak, and the Mare Gown – can turn into a fearsome aboar (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 221). The transformation lasts for one scene. Masters with the *Witchcraft* ability also gain the trait *Regeneration* (I).
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up
The player characters encounter and kill a pack of mare cats, swarms of violings, or a baiagorn, and are surprised to find that one of them is a human wearing a transformation garment. And so the hunt for the other garments begins.

Alternatively, a person they like or need to get hold of could disappear, and a monster shows up instead – most likely a baiagorn, but mare cats and violings are possible if the player characters are fresh on the adventuring path. The monster has something that belongs to the person they seek, like a piece of jewelry or clothing. At first the players may think that the monster has killed the person in question, or come from a place where the person is located; but more and more evidence suggests that the monster IS the person they seek – witness accounts, journal entries, or other clues point to that conclusion. The characters must then find a way to capture the creature without killing it, and have the Exorcism ritual cast on the victim to separate her from the transformation garment that keeps her in beast form.

HAGMANDARA'S BOW OF VENGEANCE

One of the Iron Pact's more famous darkness hunters was Hagmandara. He was best known for his corruption hating bow that, according to legend, never missed and always brought down its target; the former was an effect of the hunter's skill and the latter something of an exaggeration. But it is clear that the glowing shots of the bow lit up Davokar and burned many dark creatures to ashes. When Hagmandara finally met his end against a dozen primal abominations, the bow passed to the Iron Pact where it has served many Ironsworn over the centuries.

Blight-marked people cannot bind themselves to Hagmandara's bow; for such individuals it is just an ordinary bow.

Spark in the Dark: The master of the weapon can channel her hate of corruption into the projectiles and send them blazing at corrupted creatures. A creature hit by the arrow must roll over its corruption with 1D6; on failure the creature immediately takes the amount of damage indicated by the die. *Armor* can protect against the arrow itself, but not against this extra damage. Note that the extra damage is dealt even if the arrow does not pierce the armor; the burning light of the arrow harms the victim either way.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1 per arrow

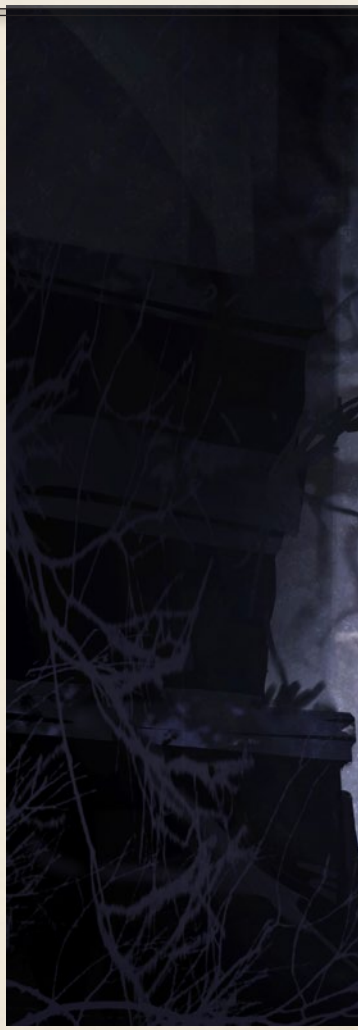
Glowing Fetters: In the hands of a master with the *Marksman* ability the arrows not only deal extra damage (see Spark in the Dark), but can also bind thoroughly corrupt creatures. A thoroughly corrupt creature hit by the arrow must pass a *Resolute* test or be trapped in chains of fire, unable to move or attack for one turn; however, it can still use mystical powers and traits.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D4 per arrow, including the effect of Spark in the Dark.

Adventure Set-up
The Iron Pact may very well introduce a new or potential member and her allies to the mission of finding the bow; they know roughly where it is, but nothing more. Getting to the place and retrieving the bow is a test of endurance and skill; binding it to oneself is a test of purity and worthiness.

THE LIVING CHAIN OF HOGARZ

It seems that Hogarz was an oddity – a troll living in Symbar. He fit in well with the local culture, as he was capturing beasts and monstrosities with his living chain. These were then paraded through Symbar to the great arena where they were pitted against other monsters or the city's heroes. Hogarz was also a great collector of trophies, and his symbol has been found carved into everything from aboar tusks to lindworm skulls and tattooed into the skins of arch trolls. An Ambrian expedition even claims to have found a stuffed dragon (albeit in terrible condition) with Hogarz's symbol etched into every tooth in its wide-open maw.

Chain Trap: A person who has bound the chain to herself can place it on the ground and trigger it as a fettering trap when someone passes over it. The master of the chain decides whether the trap is triggered and, if there are multiple creatures passing it, which creature is trapped. The victim must pass a *[Quick –8]* test or be caught, rendering them unable to move or attack in any way. Attacks against the captive are made with *Advantage*. Breaking free from the chain



Everyone cheers when an artifact is found. But before long, the quarrel about who will become its master begins...

requires a successful *[Strong –8]* test; one attempt per turn, where each level of *Robust* adds +2 to *Strong*.

The chain covers a 3 meter wide passage and can reach an equal height. In the hands of someone with *Trapper* the chain can catch two enemies who pass it, one after the other or both at once.

Action: Reaction, when someone passes the chain
Corruption: 1D4

Melee Chains: A master with the *Flailer* ability can choose to carry the chain around and have it catch an enemy attacking the master in melee; the effect is the same as if the chain was lying on the ground.

Action: Reaction, when someone attacks the master in melee
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

The magic chain is much sought after by both monster hunters and the gladiators of Yndaros who, in order to entertain the crowd, like to capture their opponents before killing them. Player characters with monster hunting ambitions could do worse than to start out with the Living Chain of Hogarz in their hands, and clues to the artifact's resting place will then be very enticing. Otherwise the chain could serve as reinforcement in the hands of an enemy, and as a reward once that enemy has been slain. And since the artifact was made by trolls, its owner risks becoming the focus of the artifact-retrieving trolls, with interesting complications as a result.

ILOONA'S MIRROR SHIELD

According to legend, the witch Iloona forged this shield with the help of a troll she saved from the maw of a king toad. She later used the shield to great success in battle against a powerful necromage who threatened her people. Iloona's fate is unknown, as is that of her shield; a boastful treasure hunter in Thistle Hold claimed to have discovered Iloona's tomb and found the shield inside, but lost the artifact playing dice shortly thereafter.

Block Magic: The master of the shield can use it to defend against magic attacks, in which case the master's *Defense* replaces *Resolute*.

Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D4

Shield Throw: A master with the *Shield Fighter* ability can once per turn throw the shield as a reaction, to block magic aimed at an ally within sight, see the shield's power Block Magic.

For a master with *Shield Fighter* at adept level or higher, the shield can also be thrown to deal damage and possibly knock down an enemy within sight. This is done as a reaction to the shield-bearer's own attack against another enemy attacked in melee (that attack is performed as well, but without the subsequent shield bash).

The shield always returns to its master's hand after the throw.

Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up

The existence of the shield and clues to its resting place are best introduced before the gaming group sets out to defeat an enemy mystic. The treasure hunter who bragged about the shield is a logical starting point for finding the artifact, and when the player characters get hold of this person (which is as easy or hard as the Game Master wants it to be) there are two variants of what happens next. One is that she tells them who won the shield from her, and that this gang leader/agitator/priest/witch hunter is still nearby. The other is that she admits that she knows the location of the tomb, but did not gamble away the shield; the treasure hunters did take the shield, but its owner came after her and suddenly the shield was in the hands of the dead witch instead! In other words, the artifact is back in the tomb, along with its undead owner.

THE CLOAK OF THE SEWER QUEEN

Legend has it that the tunnels and sewers under Lindaros were ruled by a woman called the Sewer Queen, a tramp with a unique cloak that made her very hard to catch or hurt. She was also known for abducting children and disappearing without a trace with them in her arms. Where she got the cloak and what happened to it after the Sewer Queen disappeared is unknown. Maybe it is true, as some people say, that the Sewer Queen was not human and that her presence beneath the city was a leftover from another age. In any event, the Sewer Queen is still being used to threaten naughty children in the eastern quarters of Yndaros.

Defensive Teleportation: When the master of the cloak is attacked, she can choose to teleport instead of making a *Defense* test. The master picks a spot within sight and must pass a *Resolute* test to materialize there. On failure the master remains where she is and is hit by the attack.

Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D6

Rescue Teleportation: A master with the *Bodyguard* ability can take another creature along when teleporting. If the creature resists, the master must pass a *[Resolute←Resolute]* test to bring it along. On failure they both remain where they are.

Action: Reaction, to an attack against either the master or the other creature to be teleported
Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up

The adventure could begin with the player characters needing help from someone whose child or protégé is missing. The person's condition for helping them is to get the child back, or at least discover information about lost youngster's fate. Perhaps the person the characters seek is actually a missing child? The Sewer Queen could be many things, depending on what the Game Master needs:

- *An undead sorcerer who is stealing children for the darkest purposes possible and must be stopped before more children are lost.*
- *An act of kindness passed down among homeless changelings; whoever wears the cloak is duty-bound to save other changelings and take them to a safe house where they receive help and training.*
- *The Sewer Queen might be an elf who is stealing children and leaving changelings in their stead, and the children she steals become abductees among the elves of Davokar.*
- *Perhaps the Sewer Queen is saving children from sorcerers; the "parents" or "guardians" who send the player characters on the rescue mission want the child (who is somehow special) for dark purposes. The player characters have a chance to realize that whoever took the child was trying to save it, and that their own quest givers are the true evildoers. Can be combined with the changelings' act of kindness, otherwise the Sewer Queen is some other kind-hearted person.*

THE WHISPERING NECKLACE OF LAPI-ESHA

Murals in Davokar's ruins tell of an early Symbarian princess named Lapi-Esha, who was exceptionally good with snakes and secrets. She wore a necklace in the shape of a serpent, which whispered secrets in her ear and allowed her to dominate those around her with this knowledge. The murals depict the necklace as a golden snake with a single bright blue eye, the same color as the princess' own eyes.

Lapi-Esha conquered more and more land, particularly in the region previously ruled by the cruel King Hurian-Lo Apak, and she referred to herself as High Queen over the kings of Symbaroum. But she was never crowned empress, according to legend because

she was bitten by her own serpentine necklace and died from its venom. Whether this is true or not is hard to say, but that others became emperor while she did not has been clearly established by historians.

The necklace can likely be found in the mausoleum where Lapi-Esha was laid to rest, or at the bottom of the deep pit into which a thief fell after having robbed it from her mummified body. It is clear that the necklace has not yet been found; otherwise its master would have made herself known through her plots and schemes.

Revealing Whisper: The necklace whispers secrets about whoever the master is looking at. The serpent lets its master know which attribute is the target's weakest (without mentioning its exact value), and what burdens (see the *Advanced Player's Guide*, page 56) the person has. With a successful *[Vigilant←Discreet]* test the master also learns the value of the weakest attribute and, if the target has the burden *Dark Secret*, what that secret is.
Action: Free
Corruption: 1D4

Venomous Bite: The necklace can be made to attack in melee with its venomous bite. The snake attacks once per turn at the same time as its master, against the same target. If the master hits an enemy during the turn, so does the snake. The snake only attacks once per turn, no matter how many attacks the master makes.

Roll 1D8. If the result is higher than the enemy's armor value, the snake's fangs pierce their victim; the bite itself deals no damage, but the target is afflicted by a weak poison, 1D4 damage for 1D4 turns. For masters with the *Poisoner* ability the serpent's poison is moderate and deals 1D6 damage for 1D6 turns.
Action: Reaction, when the master attacks in melee
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up
Adventures featuring the whispering necklace are best centered around intrigue and secrets. Perhaps the necklace first appears around the neck of a rival (not a mortal enemy) of the player characters, at the same time as the gaming group really needs such help to extract an important secret from another prominent person (whom they cannot kidnap or easily extort). The characters stealing, borrowing, buying, or otherwise obtaining the necklace makes up the first act of the adventure; them using it to access other people's secrets becomes act two; and what they do after realizing what the secret is becomes act three.

THE BLESSING GONG OF MALIKANDER

The Lightbringer Malikander said that his gong was a gift from Prios, another way of saying that it was created in a powerful ceremony during the Great War, back when ceremonies were still considered an acceptable means of combating darkness.

The creation of the gong was one of the incidents that caused the Queen, the Grandmaster, and the First Father to start questioning the suitability of ceremonies as weapons against dark forces – the process did not only corrupt the area where the artifact was forged, but also spread blight through a black rain that drifted over Alberetor. Contemporary documents suggest that most people assumed the black rain to be the Dark Lords' work, and no official statement was issued to correct this idea. Those who participated in the ceremony also perished in the heat of creation.

The gong is etched with tiny figures, hand in hand, surrounded by flames that do not seem to harm them. There is no doubt that Malikander thought the sacrifice was justified; he used the gong successfully against the hordes of darkness, wrapped in sky-blue bandages dipped in cooling ointment to ease the pain of his burns that never seemed to heal. There is also an inscription on the gong that reads: *"Anyone wanting to spread light must endure being on fire."*

The gong eventually fell into the hands of the enemy, when the Lightbringer and his holy warriors walked into an ambush and were slain to the last man. Where the gong went next is unknown.

The gong cannot be bound to a person using corruption, only *Experience* will do.

Rhythm of the Heart: The bright power of the artifact is harmful to corrupted creatures. The power takes three strikes at the gong to activate (active actions) and affects everyone within earshot. Anyone with permanent corruption must roll over their permanent corruption on 1D20; on failure the creature takes its permanent corruption in damage to *Toughness*. The master of the gong is affected as well, as are her allies.

Thoroughly corrupt creatures flee instead, and cannot return to the location for one month. If they cannot escape they are destroyed in a cascade of light.
Action: 3 active actions
Corruption: None, but with risk of damage according to the power's description.

Undo: In the hands of a master with the *Theurgy* ability, the power of the gong can annihilate a thing or creature within earshot. The master picks a target and strikes five times on the gong. Inanimate objects are immediately destroyed, up to the size of gates, pillars, and bridges; larger objects are damaged but not destroyed. A wall does not collapse, but a wide breach is opened in it. Artifacts are immune to the power.

Creatures must roll over their permanent corruption on 1D20 or be annihilated; on success they take their permanent corruption in damage to *Toughness*, unless they choose to run. In that case they can never return to the location again. If the target is a thoroughly corrupt creature, it is annihilated at the sound of the fifth strike; if it is quick enough to escape out of earshot the creature survives.

With each strike, the master takes her permanent corruption in damage to *Toughness*, meaning five times her permanent corruption to activate the power.
Action: 5 active actions
Corruption: None, but with possible damage according to the power's description.

Adventure Set-up

It seems appropriate that the gong's inclusion in an adventure should be based on its ability to annihilate even a legendary enemy. This could be the end of an epic chronicle where the main enemy is too powerful for the characters to defeat in any other way. The player characters must first learn about the gong, then find it, and possibly ally themselves with someone who is able to use it; a theurg with very low permanent corruption. If one of the player characters is a theurg it goes without saying that she must have sufficiently low corruption, or else the gaming group must find a way to reduce her corruption enough to allow her to wield the powers of the artifact.

NAGMIRA'S THUNDER HAMMER

The dwarf Nagmira has a mixed reputation as both oppressor and freedom fighter; to the dwarves of Yndaros she is practically a saint, while the dwarven clans in the Ravens consider her a tyrant and an outlaw. What Nagmira herself thinks no one knows, as she has not been seen in a decade. She left behind her beloved thunder hammer, driven into the stone gate of Küam Zamok. As far as anyone knows it is still stuck there to this day, since no one is able to wield it. Maybe it has something to do with Nagmira's last words: *"My hunt is over, may the next mutt find more joy in the work!"* What she had been hunting is unclear. Perhaps the runes on the hilt and head of the hammer could explain her mission, if someone was able to read them. Scholars from far and wide have tried to make sense of them, but so far no one has succeeded.

Crack of Thunder: The master can slam the weapon into the ground and unleash a mighty peal of thunder. It shoots out form the hammer and spreads like a circle in all directions. Enemies within sight of the master take 1D6 damage, *Armor* protects as usual, and they must pass a *[Strong←Strong]* test to remain on their feet – *Robust* adds +2 to *Strong*.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Flash of Lightning: A master with the ability *Two-handed Force* can make bolts of lightning shoot out from the hammer. The lightning strikes when the master hits a target in melee. The target of the lightning bolt can be the same as for the hammer blow, or another one within sight. The lightning deals 1D12 damage (ignores *Armor*).
Action: Reaction, in conjunction with a hammer blow
Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up

An intriguing possibility with the hammer is that a player character turns out to be destined to "take the next watch" – whether the character is a dwarf or not. Careful interpreters of Nagmira's words are surprised by the word "mutt". It is not a word a dwarf would use about another dwarf; the Dwarvish language has far juicier terms of abuse for that. It is a word more fitting for a human or some other cultural being, one that is worth no more than a filthy dog. For inspiration about being chosen by some higher power or force to accomplish a task, see the ritual Burdened by Fate in the Advanced Player's Guide, page 90.

The question is also what the rightful owner of the hammer should be hunting – the Game Master must come up with a clearly defined target. Retrieving the hammer from Küam Zamok's heavily guarded gate is likely the first step (combat or negotiation), but then what? Is there a hidden source of corruption in the forests or mountains that must be found and neutralized? Or maybe the mission leads to the alchemical laboratories where the dwarven race was born (guarded

by Prios knows what); perhaps the fourteen birth vessels of the original clans must be destroyed for the dwarves to take their place in the world and regain their souls (and thereby lose the Earth Bound trait)?

NEMA'S ORBIT STATUETTE

The wonder-maker Nema's orbit statuette consists of a snake locked in deadly struggle with a dragon fly, chiseled from the same block of stone. Nema is said to be its creator, an artifact crafter in Lindaros who constructed many wondrous monuments in the city – mechanical birds singing melancholy songs, fountains with water of black and gold, and (if the myth is true) a floating island that housed an execution site and a temple to the stars. The orbit statue is small and unremarkable in comparison, though very useful.

Dragon Dance: As long as the sun is up, the master can activate the upper part of the statue and summon a dragon fly, which serves the master faithfully for one scene (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 225).
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Snake Dance: As long as the sun is below the horizon, the master can activate the lower part of the statue and summon a kanaran, which serves the master faithfully for one scene (see the *Core Rulebook*, page 223).
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

The player characters, or someone else, come across some old texts suggesting that the orbit statue was hewn from the same rock as Nema's floating island; perhaps it is possible to use clues from the statue to find the rock and with it the fallen star temple of Lindaros?

With the statue in hand they can go searching for shards of similar stone in and around Yndaros and thus find remnants of the crashed sky island. Of course there are others who seek this legendary place, perhaps because of the star temple, perhaps to find the execution site with its graves for notorious murderers and sorcerers so vile not even Lindaros wanted them around. Exactly what awaits them in the ruined star temple is for the Game Master to decide, but it might very well be a meeting place for practitioners of the mystical tradition known as Astromancy.

THE EYE STONE OF PALAMUKK

Few illgoblins have made a name for themselves, but Palamukk is one of them. This crafty sibling-killer and wily corrupter of young goblins had an unlikely talent for reshaping the world the way he wanted it to be. This translated into his masterful artifact crafting and considerable skills as a blacksmith.

This was no doubt rooted in Palamukk's open disgust for the world as it was; *"it is all bad and must be changed – or destroyed"* is one of his more famous quotes. Palamukk's crowning achievement was a greater artifact in the form of an eye stone, which he inserted into his left eye socket. His plans to replace the right eye as well were interrupted by Palamukk's death at the hands of greedy relatives. The eye was auctioned in Thistle Hold and his body was sold by the kilo as pig fodder.

For the artifact to work, the master must permanently replace an eye with the stone, which grants access to its powers. Replacing the eye does not cost *Experience*, but deals 1D6 damage (ignores *Armor*). The eye stone works as a regular eye that can also see in the dark. It is emerald green and emits a faint inner light that can always be seen but is particularly noticeable in darkness.

Winds of Change: Once per turn the master of the eye stone can affect a test for an action being performed within sight; it can be any sort of test: success test, effect test, death test, etcetera, as long as chance plays a part in the outcome. The power gives the active party a 1D4 modifier to the test, positive or negative depending on the master's wishes.
Action: Reaction
Corruption: 1D4

Flash of Creation: Masters with the ability *Alchemy*, *Artifact Crafting*, or *Blacksmith* can use the Eye Stone of Palamukk to immediately create something; it appears instantly, out of thin air. As for *Blacksmith*, an adept can endow the item with a normal quality; a master can give it two qualities, one of them mystical.

The created item can be worn, used, or consumed with the same effect as the real thing. But it only exists for one scene, before withering into ashes.

Astromancers

There are very few Astromancers in Ambria, but more of them are apparently based in the western city states and the doomed Freetown on the west coast of Alberetor (for more on other realms, see the eBook *Report 22:01:08* which is available for download on Free League's *Symbaroum* page). The Astromancers deal with weather, thunder, and lightning, as well as divination; they share many rituals with other traditions. Several of Ordo Magica's powers (such as *Brimstone Cascade* and *Mind Throw*) can be converted to thunder and lightning, if so desired. Perhaps it is their skill with divination that the player characters seek, and more powerful versions of *Fortune-telling* and *Oracle* are possibilities (the rituals might allow rerolls on failure).

If the creator is willing to accept one point of permanent corruption, the object becomes permanent. Created consumables (such as elixirs) can be consumed at a later time, but will then be expended like other items of its kind.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4 (temporary object), or 1D4 including 1 permanent corruption (permanent object)

Adventure Set-up
For a goblin player character retrieving the eye stone could be a suitable mission to prove her worth to the tribe. Perhaps it is even said that whoever finds the eye shall lead the clan? Or maybe the player character is a goblin who dreams of the illgoblin's role in the world, and what better way to begin her journey than to follow in the great Palamukk's footsteps?

THE WAR HORN OF THE STORMHOWLER

This powerful war horn is large and robust enough to be wielded as a two-handed club, but the true power lies in its horn blasts, which range from loud to downright thunderous.

The horn must have come from a huge bull. According to legend it was carried by a giant who roamed around Vajvod in eastern Davokar. It took the combined efforts of several chieftains to slay the man-eating behemoth. The horn was carved with mystical runes by powerful symbolists and given to the first Clan Chieftain of Karohar as a symbol of office. It disappeared under mysterious circumstances more than a century ago, during internal conflicts between the local chieftains. Where it is now is anybody's guess, but whoever acquires the horn would certainly find a powerful ally in clan Karohar's current chieftain – or some other chieftain wishing to take his place!

Allies to the Rescue: The horn blast booms through the region and all allies within a day's march immediately become aware that the master is in danger. They also know where to find her. Ultimately the Game Master decides which allies are nearby (if any), who they are, and how far away they are from the master.

If you want to base it on die rolls, we suggest the master must pass a *Persuasive* test and that the allies are 1D10 hours away – on 0 the master rolls 1D10 again, which this time indicates a number of minutes rather than hours. The allies that come to the rescue are [PC+1] in numbers with one level of resistance lower than the master, led by a person with the same resistance level as the master (for more on resistance levels, see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 179).

Action: Free
Corruption: None

Storm Fright: In the hands of someone with the *Dominate* ability the horn can produce a horn blast so powerful that enemies might flee in fear. It takes a successful *[Persuasive←Resolute]* test to affect an enemy, who will then flee for 1D6 turns.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up
The thunderous power of the war horn could also be the key to a mighty gate somewhere in the Ravens. Either the horn is all it takes or more keys are required – perhaps a magic pearl or two, which can naturally be found in the hands of other creatures who are either hostile to the player characters or want something in return for their treasure. What hides behind the gate is up to the Game Master, but why not a mythical dwarven kingdom that was abandoned long ago and has now been taken over by dark forces?

TERRASMA'S YONDERMIRROR

Terrasma was an ancient explorer of worldly and mortal boundaries (fancier words for being a Sorcerer). Through ceremonies found in the deepest crypts of Davokar she created a magic mirror to peer further beyond the veil of the world.

The mirror was briefly described by the renowned sorcerer Arao, a contemporary of

Terrasma, as made of volcanic glass, deep black, and rather substandard as a mirror. But apparently its power is revealed to those who draw unholy symbols in their own blood on its cold surface. The mirror is a window to the Yonderworld; it was created based on the theories on Katrandama's Triptych (see page 26 in the *Advanced Player's Guide*), and believed by Arao to be strong evidence for the correctness of this ghastly world view.

They say that through the mirror Terrasma gained insights so dark that she broke away from the black path she was on, and is currently living out her days at a Black Cloak convent in the eastern Titans. This may of course be a cautionary lie spread by the Black Cloaks to lure sorcerers back into the light. Whatever the case may be, the location of the Yondermirror is unknown; it is possible that Terrasma herself knows where it is.

See Beyond: A person bound to the mirror can use it to peer into the Yonderworld. What information is gained from this depends entirely on the situation in the Yonderworld – that is, what daemons or ruins there are.

The other side can also look back. Roll 1D20 each turn, if the outcome is equal to or lower than the number of turns spent watching, the master is noticed by something on the other side; the Game Master decides what it is.

A dreadful version of this power is to look into the regular world from the Yonderworld; it is done the same way and with the same risks as described above.

Those capable of teleportation can take the mirror with them to the Yonderworld. You cannot step into the mirror and take it with you.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4 for the person activating the mirror, 1 corruption for anyone else who looks in it.

Reach Beyond: A master with the *Sorcery* ability can use the mirror to influence the Yonderworld. It is possible to reach out from the world and grab something there, and of course use powers and abilities on targets in the Yonderworld. This can be useful when fighting creatures who are teleporting, which takes place as movements through the Yonderworld.

While the power is active one can actually step through the mirror entirely and leave the regular world behind. This is possible for anyone, not just the sorcerer who activated it. To return to the world of the living one must be pulled back by people on the right side of the mirror, or use a power to teleport; one can then jump back into the regular world and stay there. A person can realize this with *Loremaster* and a successful *Cunning* test.

The other side can also influence the regular world: roll 1D20 every turn, if the result is equal to or lower than the number of turns the user spent on the other side, corrupted nature is created in the location of the mirror (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 22).

Another heinous possibility is to step out from the Yonderworld into the regular world; it is done the same way and with the same risks as described above. Any corrupted nature created emerges in the world of the living. In order to do this one must either teleport (for example with the power *Teleport*) or be teleported (the power *Exorcize*) and bring the mirror along to the Yonderworld; you cannot step into the mirror and take it with you.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4 for the person activating the power, plus 1D6–3 corruption for every five turns that begin in contact with the Yonderworld. The latter also afflicts anyone else who uses the power while it is active.

Adventure Set-up

There are several variants of adventures that might include the mirror. One is that Terrasma actually escaped to the Yonderworld when she was surrounded by Black Cloaks. She possesses Desdemorgos' Icosahedron (see page 134), which means she has not yet become thoroughly corrupt. But she regrets going there and will do anything to get back to the regular world. The player characters get an opportunity to help a sorcerer who truly wishes to do penance and mend her ways.

Alternatively, she does not have Desdemorgos' artifact and is now thoroughly corrupt. She still says the same thing, of course: that she wants to go back and will do anything the player characters ask for a second chance. But when she returns, she is neither compliant nor obedient and has stats as a Necromage.

A third variant is that Terrasma – or some other sorcerer, necromage, etc. – possesses the mirror and uses it to influence the part of the world where the player characters are located. The creature on the other side might want to get its hands on a person or artifact, or simply kill everyone in a certain place to avenge some offense. This could develop into a terrifying cat-and-mouse game where the player characters are attacked through the mirror, or even have to step through the mirror to fight the enemy in the Yonderworld.

RASTHUUL'S SPIRIT VESSEL

The descriptions of the ancient mystic Rasthuul differ, except the parts about him creating this vessel and being burned at the stake in the infancy of Symbaroum for crimes against the

laws of the world – a testimony suggesting that necromancers and corruption worshippers were not always celebrated in the early Symbarian Empire. Rasthuul survived the flames, thanks to his spirit vessel, and it was not until the emperor's bodyguards found and emptied the urn that the necromancer Rasthuul was finally destroyed. The spirit vessel was locked away in Symbar's artifact cabinet, along with a series of other particularly evil objects. How it got out of there and back into the world is unknown, but the vessel has turned up, first in Lindaros and later in the witches' stories. The existence of the spirit vessel is well-known and it is much coveted among sorcerers, who claim that Rasthuul's spirit still watches over the urn.

The master of the vessel can place her soul in it to avoid both corruption and physical death. A successful *Vigilant* test with the *Witchsight* ability reveals whether the vessel is empty or contains a spirit; in the latter case the shadow of the spirit is also revealed.

It is possible to attack and destroy the urn; it has *Armor* 2 and 10 *Toughness*. Another way of expelling a protected spirit is to bind the artifact to oneself; it takes a successful *[Resolute←Resolute]* test to expel the current master.

The only way to bind the spirit vessel to oneself is to accept 1D4 points of permanent corruption; *Experience* cannot be used for this purpose. But this permanent corruption is handled as if the person was already bound to the spirit vessel, and is therefore a problem for the future, according to the power Soul Shield.

Soul Shield: The spirit vessel protects the user's soul against corruption and the death of its physical body. Any corruption gained by the master is bound in the runes that cover the urn and never reaches the master's spirit. The same goes for the cold fingers of death, which will never touch the master – Death tests are rolled as usual, but death-bringing results are ignored.

If the master's spirit leaves the vessel (if it is broken or bound to someone else), the unprotected spirit is afflicted by all corruption that is bound by its runes. Furthermore, any postponed death immediately catches up with the master.

Action: Free

Corruption: None

Rasthuul's Echo: The spirit of Rasthuul rests to some extent in the vessel he created, and the master of the artifact can always sense if someone is about to grab or attack the spirit vessel. The master can then activate this power as a reaction, before anyone has time to affect the vessel in any way.

The power does two things. First the spirit vessel emits a wave of hatred that inflicts 1D6 damage (ignores *Armor*) on everyone within sight. Everyone present must also pass a *Resolute* test or be knocked down.

In addition, the owner of the vessel is immediately teleported to its location and manifests 1D6 meters from the vessel.

Action: Reaction

Corruption: 1D8, which is bound in the urn's runes and does not affect the master until her spirit leaves the vessel.

Adventure Set-up

On their adventures the player characters find themselves an arch enemy, and no matter how many times they kill, maim or burn this arch enemy the person keeps coming back. This is because the arch enemy's soul is resting safely in Rasthuul's spirit vessel. To defeat the enemy once and for all they must find and empty the vessel. If they succeed the player characters will have a chance to claim the artifact for themselves. Where the enemy has hidden the vessel depends on who it is – for example in its own tomb (undead), a treasure chamber in a castle (prince or chieftain), or a ruin in the Yonderworld (demonologist).

THE LANTERN OF SALAMANDRA

The infamous master spy Salamandra was thrust into the public consciousness in the final stages of The Great War, when she infiltrated the Dark Lords' strongholds to analyze their weaknesses and returned with suitable points of attack. She later became an important actor in establishing Ambria, particularly in the case of Clan Jezora – the attack on Chieftain Haloban's fortress was based on intelligence from her. These cloak-and-dagger operations would not have been possible without Salamandra's most prized possession: her dark lantern.

They say the artifact swallows light and spreads absolute darkness in which only its master is able to see. When Salamandra retired, under the weight of her experiences and Ambria's most prestigious decorations, the dark lantern passed to other spies. As far as anyone knows it is still in their hands, in the service of the Queen.

Spread Darkness: While its hatch is open, the dark lantern spreads darkness with the same radius as an ordinary lantern spreads light. The darkness is dense, but the master's vision is not affected; the same goes for those with the ability *Sixth Sense* (master) or traits that allow creatures to see in total darkness. Abominations and undead can see in the dark, but beasts cannot. The darkness follows the

lantern, and the power is canceled if the master drops the lantern.

In the hands of someone with the *Backstab* ability the lantern's darkness is so deep that only its master can see through it.

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D4

Dark Steps: In the hands of someone with the *Feint* ability, the lantern can teleport its master between areas of total darkness. For this to work the master must be able to see her next destination and Spread Darkness must be active.

Action: Movement

Corruption: 1D4

Adventure Set-up

It is tempting to link the lantern to Ambrian intrigues and the Queen's spies, but by no means is it necessary. A player character who is a former Queen's Spy knows for certain that the lantern exists, and other contacts can provide the same information. The lantern can then become an intermediate goal on the way to infiltrating some particularly well-guarded place – such as the restricted sections of Ordo Magica's library, the Royal Sekretorium's archives, or the artifact collections in Templewall. A severely haunted ruin will also suffice; there the player characters need all the advantages they can get.

WORLDCLEAVER

Worldcleaver is a two-handed sword with a wavy blade, supposedly forged in black flames deep beneath Symbar to crush the empire's enemies. It was wielded by the greatest warrior in Symbaroum, appointed through duels with captured monsters.

The person who wields Worldcleaver must have at least one blight mark, otherwise the weapon simply works as a regular two-handed sword. It is possible to trick the weapon with the ritual *Exchange Shadow*, as long as one borrows the shadow of someone with enough permanent corruption to have developed a blight mark.

Demon Birth: The master of the weapon can cleave reality instead of an enemy, and birth a daemon through the wound. The daemon obeys the wielder for one scene, before being sucked back into the world wound. The daemon has stats as an Intruder (see the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*, page 173).

Action: Active

Corruption: 1D6

Bloody Banishment: A master with the ability *Two-handed Force* can strike an enemy and cleave reality with the same attack. An enemy damaged by this attack must roll over the damage on 1D20 or be sucked into the Yonderworld.

Out in the howling madness the victim takes 1D6–3 corruption per turn. A *Resolute* test can be made every turn, which if successful returns the victim to the world of the living. Victims who are blight born during their stay in the Yonderworld immediately return to the regular world in the form of dragouls, controlled by the master of Worldcleaver.

Action: Reaction

Corruption: 1D6

Adventure Set-up

One way to build an adventure around Worldcleaver is to give the weapon an additional function, specific to the adventure. For example, in one of Dark Davokar's many ruins there could be a guardian who will only step aside for the master of this artifact. The monstrosity's resistance level must be high enough to make frontal attacks very difficult – Mighty or even Legendary is appropriate; it must be obvious to the players that this is not meant as a balanced fight. Legends, shown in mosaics on the ruin walls or available in the form of memories preserved in a memory stone, suggest that one needs a terrible weapon in order to pass. Finding the weapon (what slimy creature might have it now?) and figuring out a way to bind it to oneself are steps to solving the puzzle.

XTALA'S HOURGLASS

Feared even by the Symbarians, the necromancer Xtala was said to be able to stop time and in the safety of timelessness act according to her horrific purposes. Legend has it that a great hero named Aktopo tricked Xtala into using all the sand in her hourglass, and as a result she was hit by a time wave that reduced her to ashes and dust. The hero picked

up the hourglass, turned it over, and could stop time just as she once did; at least until all the sand ran into the other chamber of the hourglass. Aktopo was more careful than the hourglass' creator and met his end much later, at the hands of his enemies. And so the hourglass was lost to the world.

Sands of Time: The master of the artifact can let sand run through the glass and thus stop time for a number of turns. During these turns the user may act alone, and the effect of all actions occurs when time starts moving again. Every turn the master acts outside of time she becomes a year older. Furthermore, the master must roll 1D20 each turn; if the result is equal to or less than the number of turns the master has acted outside of time during the current scene, the master falls dead to the ground. No reroll is allowed; time is relentless in its vengeance.
Action: Active
Corruption: 1D4 per turn outside of time

Adventure Set-up
The hourglass is best placed in the hands of a fearsome enemy, and becomes a mighty reward for player characters who survive the encounter with its owner. A variant is that the player characters are not really after the owner of the hourglass, but the hourglass itself. The Game Master can introduce a problem that is almost impossible to solve without stopping time; the characters must fetch something from a highly corruptive place (possibly in the Yonderworld) or a lake of lava or acid, or why not the treasure heap of a dragon? If this unpleasant problem is introduced just before the player characters learn that the hourglass exists, they will probably see the latter as a solution to the former.

THE STONE OF RESURRECTION

This roughly cut block of granite is said to have come from a sorcery temple in the darkened Lyastra. The Templars stormed and razed the temple in the name of Prios, and someone brought home the stone that was pulsing with darkness. Whispered rumors suggest that it was a Templar who took the stone. The temptation was understandable; it is said that, if used correctly, the stone can bring the dead back to life, at the cost of another life untouched by corruption. Some sources claim that the sacrifice must be voluntary, others that consent is not necessary. One version of the legend states that the holy knight who took the stone gave his life to bring back a loved one, while in other tales the knight sacrifices another person in a dark and desperate attempt to be reunited with his beloved.

No one knows where the stone is, but it is said that a sorcerer who was burned at the stake in Jakaar was later seen walking through Davokar with no trace of the flames that consumed him – it might be an empty rumor, or a clue.

Voluntary Sacrifice: A person bound to the stone can sacrifice herself to bring another creature back from the dead. The person making the ultimate sacrifice must be free of corruption, but the resurrected does not have to be. However, some part of the deceased – ashes, a finger bone, or a lock of hair – must be placed on the stone before the blood of the sacrifice flows over it. The resurrected individual rises there and then, just as she was before she died. The body is healed from all wounds, but retains the corruption it had at the moment of death.
Action: Like a ritual
Corruption: None

Forced Sacrifice: A master with the *Sorcery* ability can sacrifice an unwilling cultural being to bring back another cultural being from the dead. The resurrection is otherwise the same as for a voluntary sacrifice.
Action: Like a ritual
Corruption: 1D8, one of which is permanent

Adventure Set-up
There are several possible set-ups where the player characters seek the stone in order to resurrect someone, and must either find a willing sacrifice (without corruption) or embrace their deepest darkness to succeed. Or maybe some angelic creature (without corruption) has gone missing and the player characters must try to stop a forced sacrifice before it is too late.

A traditionally evil sorcerer naturally wants to resurrect an even darker power and receive its blessing, but the story becomes more layered if the person to be resurrected is fundamentally good – a murdered lover, a lost child, or why not one of Prios' Lightbringers who is brought back to save the sorcerer (or a loved one?) from becoming thoroughly corrupt. Here the Game Master has every opportunity to twist the narrative knife a turn or two, unless a more straightforward quest to vanquish evil is desired.

Printer Friendly

You are of course welcome to make copies of the Faction Status Sheet, but from Free League's *Symbaroum* page you may also download it as a PDF – in a more printer friendly version or with the layout used here.

The Faction Status Sheet

The sheet to the right can be used to keep track of what status the player characters have with the game world's factions. On the first row below the faction headers is where you write down the characters' general status regarding that faction, after which there are two rows for specific non-player characters (if you are using the optional rule Establish a Relationship, for instance). The boxes Friend-Neutral-Enemy should be checked by the respective player, to describe the character's personal relationship with the individual factions.

NUMBER OF ADVENTURERS

CHRONICLE

GAME MASTER

YEAR

MONTH:

YNEDAR ◇ OLANDAN ◇ ANDONIA ◇ TOMOL ◇ SERLIELA ◇ MORANGAL ◇ OFELIYA ◇ AGANI ◇ ELISIAL ◇ VERION ◇ KONELIA ◇ LEANDRO ◇

FACTIONS AND RELATIONS:

FACTION:	PLAYER CHARACTER 1:	PLAYER CHARACTER 2:	PLAYER CHARACTER 3:	PLAYER CHARACTER 4:	PLAYER CHARACTER 5:
HOUSE KOHINOOR	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
ORDO MAGICA	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
THE PRIESTHOOD	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
BLACK CLOAKS	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
THE REFORMISTS	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
TEMPLARS	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
THE WITCHES	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
SOVEREIGN'S OATH	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
SACRED OF THE OLD BLOOD	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					
THE IRON PACT	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY	◇ FRIEND ◇ NEUTRAL ◇ ENEMY
GENERAL STATUS:					
NPC:					
NPC:					

It was dead silent...

... in the ranks, so breathlessly tense that the creaking of our leather armor felt deafening; just as silent as our Davokar outpost had been for the past three weeks. Even the sellswords that our Lord had hired in an attempt to tip the scales in his favor seem to appreciate the gravity of the situation – they made up the rear of the column, atypically in line, unusually disciplined. Silent.

We had no idea what to expect. The scouts had not come back, neither the first, nor the second troupe that had left for the outpost. Some homing pigeons belonging to the latter returned, but without information about what had happened. Was it a belligerent branch of Clan Karohar? A raving liege troll or a pack of predators? An ancient or dark contagion, or indeed some roaming abomination?

The truth proved even worse: Iron Pact warriors, backed by Ironsworn barbarians. They attacked without question, without hesitation, without mercy – out of the shadows, from the foliage, from behind root and stem and stone. My advice to you who are to inherit my Lord's domain is simple: Let yourself settle for what can be harvested under open skies; that which is shadowed by the trees of Davokar is not yours to own or salvage. Accept this, or join the ranks of the dead...

WITH THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE, *Symbaroum's* collection of core books is complete! Between its covers are three solid sections, meant to inspire and support Game Masters when it comes to everything from the creation of homebrew adventures to managing sessions around the gaming table. No matter if you choose to embrace it all or only pick the goodies out of the cake, the tips and alternative rules presented in this book will certainly help make adventures in *Symbaroum's* game world even more spicy, thrilling and memorable!

FEATURED CONTENT

- *The Adventure section*, with chapters on the design of game worlds, chronicles, adventure landscapes and of adventures set in the Underworld, Yonderworld and Spirit World. It also offers tips regarding how to construct scenarios for experienced player characters, and guidelines for Troupe Play in Symbaroum.
- *The Challenges section*, containing alternative rules for pitched battles, advanced traps and social challenges. Adding to this are chapters on Ceremonial Magic (including sixteen ceremonies), expeditions in Davokar, exploration of ruins, the design of legendary creatures and rules for handling player characters owning and managing an estate or smaller domain.
- *The Rewards Section*, which offers suggestions on different ways of rewarding player characters and their players, aside from *Experience* and shiny coins. The chapters also present guidelines for designing what in *Symbaroum* are called Curiosities, Mystical Treasures and Artifacts, after which the book is rounded off with the description of no less than twenty seven artifacts – all of them with a unique adventure set-up.
- Note that this book requires access to the *Symbaroum Core Rulebook*, and that it does not come into its own without the *Advanced Player's Guide* and the *Symbaroum Monster Codex*.

Symbaroum

FREE LEAGUE